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**BULL RUN:
ALL THE ACTION!**

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#1 4X4 MAGAZINE IN SA

DRIVE OUT

**4X4s
OF THE YEAR
THE 6 WINNERS**
p 28

WILD ANIMALS:
all the dos and
don'ts p 21

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TEL: 011 670 8400
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WWW.MICKEYTHOMPSON.CO.ZA

THE TEAM

EDITOR Jaco Kirsten | jaco@driveout.co.za

CONTENT EDITOR Gerda Engelbrecht

FEATURES EDITORS

Charles Thompson | charles.thompson@media24.com

Gerrie van Eeden | gerrie@driveout.co.za

COPY EDITOR Aimee Bishop | aimee.bishop@weg.co.za

DESIGNER Robin Verhoog | robin.verhoog@media24.com

JOURNALIST Evan Naudé | evan.naudé@media24.com

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST Annemie Lombard

OFFICE MANAGER Donvé Myburgh

021 443 9830 | donve.myburgh@media24.com

GENERAL MANAGER: LIFESTYLE Charlene Beukes

CFO: LIFESTYLE Raj Lalbahadur

PRODUCTION MANAGER Kerry Nash

GENERAL MANAGER: LEISURE Louise Meny-Gibert

PUBLISHER Nerisa Coetzee

FINANCIAL MANAGER Muneeb Adams

HEAD: CIRCULATION: Gadija Gamielidien

HEAD OF RETAIL: CIRCULATION: Andreline van Tonder

CIRCULATION MANAGER Riaan Weyers

MARKETING Lea Gerber | lea.gerber@media24.com

SHOP QUERIES Kelyn Donough

kelyn.donough@media24.com

ADVERT PRODUCTION TEAM Brigitte Blackenberg,

Madré Mostert, Paige Viljoen

GROUP ADVERTISING

HEAD OF ADVERTISING SALES Yvonne Shaff

HEAD: SALES SECTORS Craig Nicholson

BUSINESS MANAGER (DBN) Theresa Lavery

031 566 2442 | theresa.lavery@media24.com

DIRECT & CLASSIFIED SALES

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER: TRAVEL & MOTORING

Danie Nell | 082 859 0542 | danie.nell@media24.com

KEY ACCOUNT MANAGERS

Nick Fitzell | 071 430 6311 | nick.fitzell@media24.com

Jeanine Kruger | 082 342 2299 | jeanine.kruger@media24.com

Sanetha Meintjies | 084 416 5797

sanetha.meintjies@media24.com

Lizel Pauw | 082 876 8189 | lizel.pauw@media24.com

Sharlene Smith | 083 583 1604 | sharlene.smith@media24.com

Thea Thomas | 078 450 7771 | tthomas@media24.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS, RENEWALS AND QUERIES

FOR THE PRINTED MAGAZINE:

TEL: 087 740 1037 | FAX: 021 405 1102 |

INTERNATIONAL QUERIES: +27 21 065 0033

E-MAIL: driveoutsubs@media24.com

SMS: "driveoutsubs" to 32361 (R1 per SMS)

WEBSITE: www.my-mags.com

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Editorial and marketing queries

TEL: 021 443 9830

STREET ADDRESS: 4th Floor, Absa Building,

4 Adderley Street, Cape Town, 8001

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO Box 740, Cape Town, 8000

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JACO SAYS

The Bull Run, shopping lists and car talk



By now I've recovered from the Bull Run. You had to experience it: more than 120 vehicles, over 300 participants and about 200 spectators, with no drama or complaints, just a lot of fun and dust. But the dust wasn't a problem, it was simply an affirmation of the almost-insane fun people were having with their vehicles in Vosburg.

In this issue we've devoted a couple of pages to this year's Bull Run. But whether it really gives you an idea of how fantastic this event was remains to be seen. The only way you'll ever truly experience the magic and fun of the Bull Run is to enter in time for next year's event. And no, please don't start pestering Gerrie yet!

He's been quite busy helping us put together our yearly Christmas gear guide. So whether you're looking for a comprehensive LED lighting kit for your vehicle and camping spot, or whether you want one of the best cooler boxes money can buy, there's something for everyone.

As is customary at this time of the year, we've put together our 4x4 of the Year Awards. You've heard the saying: "Beware of the man who has only read one book?" Well, if you think he's dangerous, wait until you have to read the e-mails from

people who only know one bakkie! The problem with those of us who drive many vehicles is that eventually you realise that they all have good and bad features. The bottom line is that there is no such thing as a perfect vehicle. What is a superb set of wheels for one person could be a supreme source of irritation to someone else.

Some people still believe in manual gears, even though they've never tried out a modern 4x4 in off-road conditions, while others are convinced that a turbo engine will self-destruct at about 50 000 km.

If I look at the lack of mechanical sympathy some people display while driving, I'm surprised some vehicles last longer than 30 000 km, but that's a discussion for another day. The fact remains that if you use good judgement and the correct techniques, you'll be able to handle most terrains in the average 4x4 vehicle.

This year there are new winners in two hotly contested segments – the Ford Ranger double cab and the Everest SUV. Next year Toyota launches its new Hilux and Fortuner and then we might have new winners again. Or not. That's how life works.

Regardless, if you should corner me and demand that I tell you which 4x4 is the best, I'm going to give you my standard answer: "The one in your garage. Preferably in white."

So buckle up and hold on.
Here we go.

Jaco

PHRASE of the month

MARINDA LOUW COETZEE ON NIEUWOUDTS PASS WHEN CAMPING WITH FRIENDS (P 104):

“It's time for us to tackle Nieuwoudts Pass, and the Lada shakes more than a bottom in a pair of hipster pants.”

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BULL RUN

Check out all the fun in Vosburg.

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Baobabs and bush

Join Bhejane 4x4 Adventures for a self-drive guided tour from Botswana to Victoria Falls. Read more on p 36.



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WILD COAST

Knee-deep in mud



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Write up a travel plan of your dream vacation in 400 words or less. South Africa? Deep in the African bushveld? Let your imagination fly as you describe your dream trip! Please write it in story format and not in cryptic telegram or bullet-point style. We would also appreciate a holiday photo of you or your family. The winner's story will be published in *Drive Out*.

HOW DO I ENTER?

Send your story (of 400 words) to editor@driveout.co.za (make the subject "Apollo tyres"). The competition closes 25 March 2016.



apollo



GO THE ————— DISTANCE

Contributors

Far and wide



WOUTER LABUSCHAGNE
READER STORY, P. 77

Wouter Labuschagne is a medical doctor from Middelburg, Mpumalanga. He has travelled to Kaokoland and Damaraland more than 10 times.

What's your first travel memory?

A journey to Kaokoland with an old business partner in a Kombi Syncro. One night, while sleeping under the stars in the Hoanib river bed, I was woken up by a herd of elephants strolling through our camp. That's how you fall in love with Namibia.

Favourite spot in the bush?

The Huab and Aba-Huab river beds. There you become part of nature, surrounded by an abundance of animals.

Best travel tip?

Consider the needs of everyone in your group. Happy travellers are the key to a good trip.

Do you plan in detail or go with the flow?

I plan months ahead and in detail. But that doesn't mean everything goes according to plan! You have to see how workable your routes are once you get there. And that's when it's a true joy to have fellow travellers who can help you with a Plan B.

Which part of Southern Africa would you still like to explore?

I know Namibia almost better than my own country by now, so we're planning to visit the Richtersveld and the Wild Coast next.

Any writers you particularly enjoy?

Johan Badenhorst. He motivates me – no problem is ever too big.



ADÉL GROENEWALD
GAMTOOS VALLEY, P. 37

Adél Groenewald is a freelance writer and serial traveller based in Cape Town. Vietnam and Cambodia are next.

What's your first travel memory?

Sitting on the backseat of my parents' Hyundai Accent, with my brother on the other side of two huge boxes full of rusks. We were on a two-week trip to Namibia!

Favourite spot in the bush?

During a five-week long trip alone through the

Kruger, I watched the sun go down over the Mathekanyane lookout point, surrounded by the bush.

Best travel tip?

Roll up your clothes instead of folding them. I even do that at home now.

Do you plan trips in detail or go with the flow?

I like a balance. I always worry about accommodation so I book that far ahead. But I also like to have a few days with nothing on the itinerary.

Which part of Southern Africa would you still like to explore?

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Any writers you particularly enjoy?

Both of Alain de Botton's travel books are great, but I usually prefer novels that take place in other countries, like *Bonjour Tristesse* by Françoise Sagan and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.

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WINNING LETTER

BE RESPONSIBLE IN THE DUNES



In the article "When the 4x4 bug bites" (*Drive Out* #89), written by one of your readers, Adriaan de Meyer, he tastefully describes how his vehicle eats up sand and you published a photo where he is driving on dunes in the direction of Hondeklip Bay. This gives the impression that it's acceptable to do this.

If the reader drove from Port Nolloth to Hondeklip Bay, as I understand the article, there are more than enough "normal" roads that he could have taken, and I can't understand where he got lost off the road. Kleinsee and Koi-ingnaas are the only two coastal towns between Port Nolloth and Hondeklip Bay, and Adriaan must have totally lost focus if he ended up on the dunes. All that I can think is that he intentionally drove into the dunes, through one of the gates along the main road.

Such articles can cause a lot of damage to our environment. We regularly get groups of tourists (especially in the

December holidays) that come here with their 4x4s and quad bikes to do some dune driving. At the end of the holiday there are lots of unhappy faces when the involved persons have racked up massive fines and feel that their holidays were ruined by the local authorities.

The damage done to the dunes is irreparable, and can't be measured against unhappy faces or thousands of rands worth of fines...

The authorities considered making places already damaged beyond repair available for dune driving. As far as I know, this hasn't been done yet, which means that it is currently still illegal to leave the existing roads on the coast to go play in the dunes. I hope the editorial team will be more sensitive to this in future. If you see the damage done to our coastline's dunes and plant life, you'll see why such activity should not be encouraged.

The courts don't accept ignorance as an excuse, and I would guess that the

Department of Environmental Affairs would like to have a chat with Adriaan, especially because his photo (with his bakkies registration number) can be seen so clearly.

JOHAN DE WAAL
Richtersveld

Johan, I have to come to the defence of Adriaan and reiterate that they ended up on those sand roads and dunes because they genuinely got lost due to a GPS navigation error. I had thought that this was clearly explained in the article. However, I can see how one could get the (wrong) impression from the caption that it seems to be okay for people drive in sensitive areas. That wasn't our intention, because we are just as concerned about the environment as you are. Thank you for the letter, we appreciate your concern.

– Jaco Kirsten



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SHOULD TYRES BE MOUNTED THE WRONG WAY AROUND?



Something that's bothered me for a long time is the direction tyres turn when considering the type of tread. Then I saw an answer on a photo from the Koës Pan Rally (*Drive Out* #93).

I compared the tyres on the red Sandmaster in the photo, which are mounted the other way around, with the tread of the Baja Claw MTZ on the advert on page 2 of the same issue. On all the vehicles that I see today, tyres will turn in the same direction as the Baja Claw. So the rubber blocks in the middle of the tyre form an arrow-pattern on the ground, according to their design.

Fitted the other way around, as on the Sandmaster, where it would make an inverted V pattern, the blocks would

have more grip. In other words, the gravel will collect in the V, and not look like an arrow on the ground. Thus the ground won't be pushed away, as with the arrow pattern.

To illustrate my point: The arrow pattern will grip less than an inverted V or arrow that is facing the opposite direction. But resistance against the tyre still gives the needed grip and stability. I'll admit that in mud it might mean taking on more mud, but on gravel and sand, mounting your tyres the other way around, as with the Sandmaster, could be more advantageous.

My question is, why aren't tyres mounted the opposite way more often?

HERMIE DE JONGH
Ceres

Hermie, I think that those Sandmaster's tyres are the wrong way around! The "V" in off-road tyres faces "forward" so that they can displace as much mud as possible while the tyres move forward. The same principle counts for road tyres where it helps to displace water. If the arrow faces "backwards" it would cause mud (or water) to get stuck in the middle of the "V" and the tyres would lose their grip more quickly. The gaps between the blocks of the Mickey Thompson Baja's are still big enough to provide sufficient grip in all off-road driving conditions. Interestingly enough the Sandmaster-type of vehicle on the photo has rear-wheel drive.

– **Jaco Kirsten.**

LOTS OF MONEY FOR FEW FACILITIES IN KHAUDUM

Our group of 10 friends from Vredendal undertook a trip to the beautiful Khaudum and Caprivi in Namibia on the 9th of August in 5 vehicles. We began this tour with great enthusiasm and we certainly weren't disappointed – until we had to overnight on the 13th of August at the northern camp in Khaudum (Khaudum Camp).

We were surprised when we arrived and heard that the fee to camp was R300 per person per night, plus R100 per vehicle. And that for a very primitive bush camp. Your camp site consists of a strip of neatly cut bush, a wooden structure and a primitive toilet without a door or roof. There was no water or electricity. We complained but the officials just shrugged their shoulders.

When in Rundu, I went to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and there too the officials just shrugged their shoulders because the camp site is

privately run. So, if you want to go to Khaudum, just know that you are going to pay quite a lot for very little in terms of facilities.

BRAAM COETZEE
Vredendal

RUN-IN WITH BOOKINGS AT SPITZKOPPE

I recently had problems with booking at Spitzkoppe in Namibia and I just wanted to warn other readers. I booked via the "Spitzkoppe Reservations and Information Centre" and the person assured me that he handles the bookings for the community camp sites at Spitzkoppe.

When we arrived we were informed by the camp manager that the "Spitzkoppe Reservations and Information Centre" didn't make the booking with them, and that this centre often misleads tourists. They create the impression that you can make a booking through them for the

Spitzkoppe community camp site, but their camp site is actually outside of the reserve. So we had to pay again to stay in the community camp site.

When we got back, I got an email (even though they had my cellphone number) informing me that my accommodation had been "upgraded" to the Spitzkoppe mountain camp. I asked them for my money back because I didn't ask them for an "upgrade", but I received neither an answer nor my money back from them.

According to the officials at the community camp site, "Spitzkoppe Reservations and Information Centre" is no longer registered with the Namibian Tourism Board. The tourism board warns people that this centre doesn't ask for their advertised price. I advise travellers to Namibia to avoid this centre and their services.

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IN AWE IN KAOKOLAND

We recently travelled to North-West Namibia. No matter how many months you've planned and organised for the trip, nothing can truly prepare you for the experience that awaits!

At first glance it seems to be a harsh, rugged and dry wasteland but then, as if awakening from a dream, you start to see all the beauty! There is beauty in the tenacity of the Welwitschia, the sky is a different shade of blue, and there are various hues of brown and orange mountains, dunes and hard gravel yet to be turned into sand by nature. No sunset has ever been painted the way we saw them there! With the full moon rising and creating shadows over the mountains, we were in awe.

Starting our trip at the Cheetah Conservatory just before Kamanjab we stopped for a cuddle with these majestic animals.

At some places we thought we had landed on Mars, especially when driving towards Amspoort and Puros canyon, then again we were the only aliens in this landscape of rocks! We felt like we

were driving towards tomorrow and we chased mirage after mirage, playing hide and seek, only to have the image reappear a few kilometres down the trail.

We saw the beauty of trees stubbornly rooted in the dry river beds where we camped in the Amspoort Gorge. It had rained a few days before our arrival and we discovered that the dry river beds were an illusion, but only once we were stuck did we realize the sand was actually mud!

Here and there the land was a patchwork of young green succulents. We followed the spoor of the illusive desert elephants, but didn't have the joy of spotting one. However we were spoiled by encounters with a reclusive black rhino, giraffes, zebras, Springbok and Gemsbok later on our journey.

Our GPS guided us to Green Drum and Red Drum. The corrugated road left us minus two tyres and we had to stop a couple times to re-tie a roof rack. We literally climbed the mountain to reach Etambura Camp for a good shower, as we were starting to blend in with our surroundings! The local Himba tribe were so accommodating

and obviously proud of their traditions.

Although some trails and routes were on the beaten track – it wasn't overflowing with tourists and we didn't encounter another tourist for five days. This is a mystical land reserved only for the special few who have travelled along this route.

This journey has given us insight nature's tenacity to survive. Kaokoland is an experience which cannot be described by travel books. It was created for those who wish to take the time and effort to visit and they will be rewarded with beautiful creation. It will live in our memories as loudly as the silence that echoed behind us as we made our way back down south via Sesfontein, retracing our steps all the way back to Kamanjab, then Windhoek and sadly.... back home.

Total: 12 days and covering a distance of 4 200 km

NICK VALAKELIS AND FRIENDS
Pretoria

THAT CRUISER IS THIRSTY!

Charles Thompson's article about Swaziland (*Drive Out* #91) was very interesting. It sent me on a trip down memory lane.

We also toured Swaziland and its surroundings about three years ago. What struck me was that Charles says their fuel consumption with the Toyota Land Cruiser 4.2 diesel was about 18 litre/100 km. That's

quite heavy! It's a wonderful vehicle, but you have to have deep pockets to drive it. Our consumption with our 3L D-4D Fortuner 4x4 diesel on our trip was just over 9 litre/100 km. And that included about 200 km in the Kruger National Park as well.

Our average with the Fortuner since 2008 is about 9,5 litre/100 km. And we've driven in some hectic places. True, I'm sure

there are some places that the Cruiser can get to where the Fortuner can't, but nowadays, it's only in under serious circumstances that we wouldn't dare tackle it.

CONNIE MARAIS
Pretoria

(Read 4x4 Expert on this topic on p 16)

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Infrastructure upgrade

A new bridge and road network planned for Mozambique could significantly cut travel time.

A new bridge over Maputo Bay and an upgrading of the road network in southern Mozambique will soon make it much easier and quicker to travel in the region.

At a length of 680m and a height of 60m above sea level, the new bridge will be the largest suspension bridge in Africa. The whole structure includes a 1230m precast concrete element, an 1100m cantilever bridge and the 680m suspension bridge. The total construction network, at a cost of R9.8 billion, will cover roughly 170km.

The first 115km of the network will connect Maputo via Catembe with Ponta do Ouro, one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

The current state of the roads, which in many places are no more than gravel and sand, make travelling in these parts difficult and slow. With a proper connection to Ponta do Ouro, the road leading to the SA border will also be upgraded.

The second part of the bridge will connect Bela Vista, halfway between Maputo and Ponta do

Ouro, with Boane. This 65km connection will also improve access to the eastern border of Swaziland. Five existing bridges in this area, over the Tembe, Changane, Mahubo, Boane and Umbe-luzi rivers, will also be upgraded.

KwaZulu-Natal's MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Michael Mabuyakhulu, reckons the bridge will cut queues at the border as well as reduce travel times.

"With the construction of the bridge and the road linking the bridge, it will reduce the travelling time from Maputo to Durban by approximately four hours," he said, according to the *Swazi Observer*.

Construction has already started and the aim is to complete the project by December 2017. The project is a joint effort between the Mozambique and Chinese governments and Gauff, a German engineering firm.

Sources: *Gauff.net*, *IOL.co.za*,
Swazi Observer, *Travel24.com*

BRIGHT IDEA

Let it breathe

On a recent tour in Angola, on the old war and other unknown roads, we arrived at the Longa River, a few kilometres south of Baixo Longa. We had to cross the river, but in one spot about halfway through the river, it was just slightly too deep to get through safely without a snorkel. My navigator wanted to turn around, but I don't give up that easily. I asked for a postponement until the next day so that I could have some time to come up with a plan. We camped right there next to the river.

That night, as I lay on my stretcher under the stars, I came up with a plan. The next day I opened the bonnet and tied the air intake's cover to it as high up as I could. Then I simply adjusted the intake pipe too, to suit the new orientation. I used two shovels and a strap to keep the bonnet open and voila, we could drive through!

Jan Slabber
Bethlehem



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BY MIC VAN ZYL



SUSPENSION LIFTS: Do they influence fuel consumption?

Could it be that lifting your vehicle's ride height by a few centimetres can hurt your fuel consumption, or is that just an old wives' tale? **Mic van Zyl** did the maths.

A distant relative of mine drives a 4x4 and does quite a bit of touring and off-road driving. His pride and joy has a full replacement bumper and winch fitted to the front and an extra spare wheel mounted to a sturdy replacement rear bumper, making it a prime candidate for a suspension upgrade.

But he refuses to do it, claiming that the two-inch increase in ride height will negatively affect the fuel consumption. As much as it pains me to see his vehicle without my suspension product fitted to it, his argument does have some merit.

Numbers don't lie

I've always kept a meticulous record of my Fortuner D-4D auto's fuel consumption. The 3.0 diesel engine gave an aver-

age of 10,81 litre/100km over the first four years with a good mix of city and long distance trips. For the past two years it's been mom's taxi, with almost no open road driving, and consumption has crept up to 12,8 litre/100km.

I got the vehicle new and drove it for four months as standard. That period saw an average of 10,78 litre/100km.

When I fitted a snorkel, fuel consumption dropped to 10,33 litre/100km, and when I did a two-inch suspension lift and full bumper replacement (bull bar and winch), consumption settled at an average of 10,91 litre/100km. So the fuel consumption went up slightly.

I fitted a roof rack but removed it due to wind noise. Consumption on the open road, with the roof rack, yielded

11,12 litre/100km. At another point, I fitted a performance chip. At highway speeds, the consumption was no different, but in town it shot up to around 12,02 litre/100km. This was due to the temptation of extra power and a heavy right foot.


The FJ Cruiser that I drive now is just plain heavy on fuel. The suspension fitment I did caused no increase in fuel consumption, but the roof rack pushed fuel consumption up by around 12%.

Force of nature

During my ownership of the Fortuner, I did many trips

from Joburg to Bloemfontein. It became obvious that wind direction has a major effect on consumption. Driving 400km into the wind at 120km/h would give a consumption of up to 12,68 litre/100km. Returning the same day, with the wind from behind, would give a consumption of 9,73 litre/100km at the same speed.

It is a fact that an increase in ride height on a typical four-wheel drive will increase the frontal area of the vehicle. That directly relates to an increase in wind resistance, leading to an inevitable increase in fuel consumption. But the wind had a much bigger influence on fuel consumption than my recorded averages before and after the suspension fitment.

In my experience, the influence of a suspension lift on fuel economy is marginal compared to other factors, such as a roof rack and wind direction. 

Mic van Zyl is the general manager of Ironman 4x4 Africa, the sole importer and distributor of Ironman 4x4 products.

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4X4 ACADEMY



Sorting your recovery kit

Last month, **ALAN GOODWAY** laid out the bare essentials to start building your recovery kit with. This month, he looks at some safety basics to put into it.

You don't need thousands of things to build a proper recovery gear bag for your vehicle. Just make sure you buy the right items for your 4x4's weight and intended use, and you'll be on your way to safe, successful recoveries.

Recovery lanyard

A lanyard is tied to your tow rope or kinetic strap and your vehicle during a recovery. If the rope snaps, the lanyard will "choke" it, preventing it from flying dangerously through the air. Lanyards come in two lengths, and I keep two of each length in my kit.

Recovery link

If the stuck vehicle is far from the towing vehicle, the kinetic strap can be lengthened by joining it to a second strap with a recovery link (as long as the two straps share the same specifications and rating).

Recovery blanket

This weighted blanket is used to dampen cable fail when winching. You hang it more or less in the middle of the taught winch cable, and if the cable snaps or breaks loose from its anchor point, the weight of the blanket makes it drop

to the ground and not fly through the air. It looks like a vest, with strong Velcro connections at the bottom that make it easier to reposition it on a winch line than the traditional closed loop orange blanket filled with sand. These blankets can be used with kinetic straps as well.

I rely on a combination of recovery lanyard and recovery blanket configurations to ensure maximum safety. It's best to learn the methods and safety of a winch and recovery blanket in a proper recovery course.

Soft shackle

This is a new invention and only made for an emergency, when no recovery point is available on your vehicle. Carrying one of these, especially to help others in need, is a good idea. They can also be put to good use in off-road towing recoveries. This item is not generally available in the shops at present. Contact me via email if you need one. ✉

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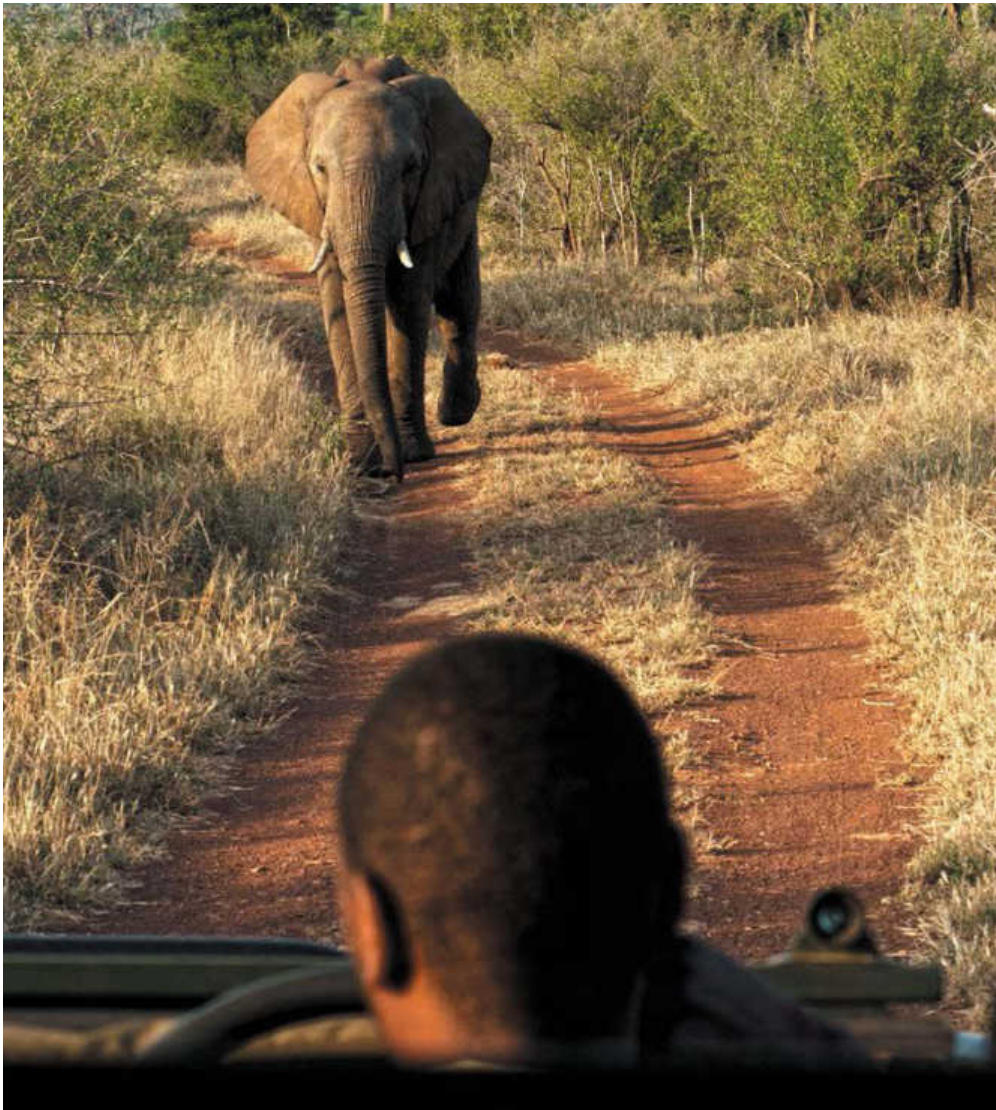
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WILD ANIMALS: How to avoid trouble

If you don't know how to deal with animals like lions, elephants or hyenas in their natural environment, you might just end up on tonight's menu.

WORDS: CHARLES THOMPSON

It's not just hapless foreign tourists who rub Southern Africa's wildlife up the wrong way. Animal attacks are a risk for anyone who drives or camps in the wild. And may you never be that person who has a breakdown deep in the bush and has to walk through an area where wild animals roam. Because if you don't know how to deal with predators, you could end up as a snack.

We approached Riaan Haasbroek, owner of Bushward Safaris, for advice on what to do if you encounter wild animals in the bush. He spends up to seven months a year guiding bush trips and running survival courses. And he's had an encounter or two. "Just the other day, an elephant trampled my tent! People often misjudge animals. Without the right knowledge, that could be your last mistake."

1. ELEPHANTS

Botswana has the largest elephant population in Southern Africa, followed by Zimbabwe.

Around camp

- In a fenced camp, pitch your tent at least 3 metres from the perimeter. Elephants have been known to rip up tents they can reach.
- In open camps, check for elephant and wildlife paths and make sure your camp is not in one, especially around waterholes.
- Never set up camp under fruit trees.
- Make sure food is sealed and locked up, and never keep food in your sleeping tent, especially fruit. Be very careful with citrus – it attracts elephants like a drug.
- Elephants usually hit the road if you make a noise, like banging a pot.
- Watch out for herds. If one enters your camp, don't try chase its members off. They will usually just stroll through.

In the veld or on the road

- Never corner an elephant between your vehicle and bushes or a tree.
- Watch out for teenage elephants. They often launch mock charges, but if you don't get out of the way, the mother could charge for real.
- Watch out for the following warning signs:
 1. It stops eating with a mouth full of grass.
 2. It walks about restlessly.
 3. It lifts its trunk suddenly.
 4. The ears flap and it starts to trumpet.



RIAAN SAYS:

"With bulls, watch out for tears from the gland between the eyes and the ears, and a urine drip. These are signs of a rut-tish animal that can be highly unpredictable."



2. LIONS

You'll find lions in places like the Kalahari, Lowveld, Chobe, Moremi, Savuti and the Khaudum, as well as other desert areas of Namibia and the Central Kalahari in Botswana. They also roam in Kruger and other South African parks, of course, but mostly behind fences.

Around camp

- Look after your trash – never dump leftovers in the veld or in dustbins at camp. Don't burn it either – the smell travels for miles.
- Keep dirty dishes far from your sleeping area.
- When going to the bathroom, make sure there aren't any lions around, and try to walk in pairs so someone can stand guard.
- If a lion tries to steal your food, let it. Rather your food than your life.
- If they're sniffing around camp at a distance, blind them with a torch and make a noise, or throw a stick or stone in their direction to chase them off.
- If you encounter aggressive lions, get yourself and anyone with you into a vehicle or chalet immediately. A tent won't save you.
- Lions sniff tents. If you're inside, don't slap the canvas or make noise to chase them away.

Leave them be, they'll sniff around and leave.

- Never, ever keep food in your sleeping area.
- Keep your car keys close. People have managed to chase lions away by activating a car alarm or hooter.
- Big fires help, but some animals have become used to them.

In the veld

- If you have to walk through an area where lions roam, walk in a pair – one person watches the track, the other checks for lions.
- Take a pot and a spoon or metal spatula to make noise.
- Keep some stones or a catty handy.
- If a lion spots you, never run. Look at the animal, plan an escape route to the nearest high tree and slowly walk to it in reverse.

3. HIPPOS

Hippos are mostly active at night or early in the morning and late afternoon as they move to and from grazing grounds.

Around camp

- Throw something in its direction and make a noise.
- Look for a high obstacle like a vehicle (or even a tent). With their short legs, hippos are quick on the charge, but powerless against high objects.
- Once it starts running, don't try to chase it off. Get out of the way ASAP.
- Hippos run in straight lines and struggle to turn at speed. A quick side step could save your life (*Just ask Cheslin Kolbe – Jaco*).
- A torch will only irritate a grumpy hippo more.

In the veld or on the road

- The biggest danger is getting between a hippo and the water. If it happens, just clear the way and let it through.
- Never get between a cow and her offspring.
- If you're on foot, seek higher ground immediately, like a large boulder, koppie or tree.



RIAAN SAYS:

"Nothing stops a charging hippo."



RIAAN SAYS: *"If you run, you're toast."*



4. HYENAS

You'll find lots of hyenas, particularly in Moremi and Savuti. "Hyenas are extremely sly," says Riaan. "Once they know you have food, they'll come back again and again. They'll even stalk your camp from different angles."

Around camp

- Store all food and trash in your vehicle.
- If they come too close, shoot them with a catty or throw something in their direction.
- Clap your hands, scream hard or kick up lots of dust.

In the veld or on the road

If you happen to come across a pack of hyenas in the bushveld, be extremely careful – the hyenas are out on the hunt. Get yourself and anyone with you to the safety of a vehicle immediately.



RIAAN SAYS: "Hyenas seem to understand "voertsek".

5. SCORPIONS AND SNAKES

Southern African snakes don't hibernate. They're less active in winter, but snakes and scorpions are a danger throughout the year.

Around camp

- Keep your tents closed.
- Put your shoes on your vehicle rather than outside the tent.
- Be especially careful when taking down and rolling up your tent.

In the veld

- Watch out for snakes in termite mounds, tree trunk holes and piles of leaves under trees.
- Check for scorpions under rocks or any piece of wood you gather for the fire.



RIAAN SAYS:

"Snakes and scorpions both love mounds of wood in the veld."



DRIVE OUT SAYS:

If an animal threatens your life, it's one thing, but don't shoot it in the face with your catty or pelt it with big rocks just because it's sniffing around your camp. Remember, out there, you're the visitor, not them.

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Which gadgets get the gold?

Which navigation gadget is the best one to put in those empty Christmas stockings? Our GPS guru found some inspiration while travelling in Zambia.

I'm writing this article from a camp site on the Chobe River. On this road trip, I realised yet again how important access to all kinds of tourist information is when you travel. Maps, navigation and reference guides are all high on up on the list.

So then, which electronic gadgets are best for meeting these needs?

Gadgets galore

On my dashboard, I have a Garmin Montana, an iPad Mini, a smartphone and a SPOT satellite tracker. Underneath, I have a vehicle tracking device which relays my position via GSM networks.

I prefer a dedicated GPS for navigation. While navigation options on smartphones are vast, and some work really well, I prefer to use the Garmin Montana. This tough outdoor GPS unit lets you discover more info than a road model, like road labels and points of

interest, on a fair-sized screen.

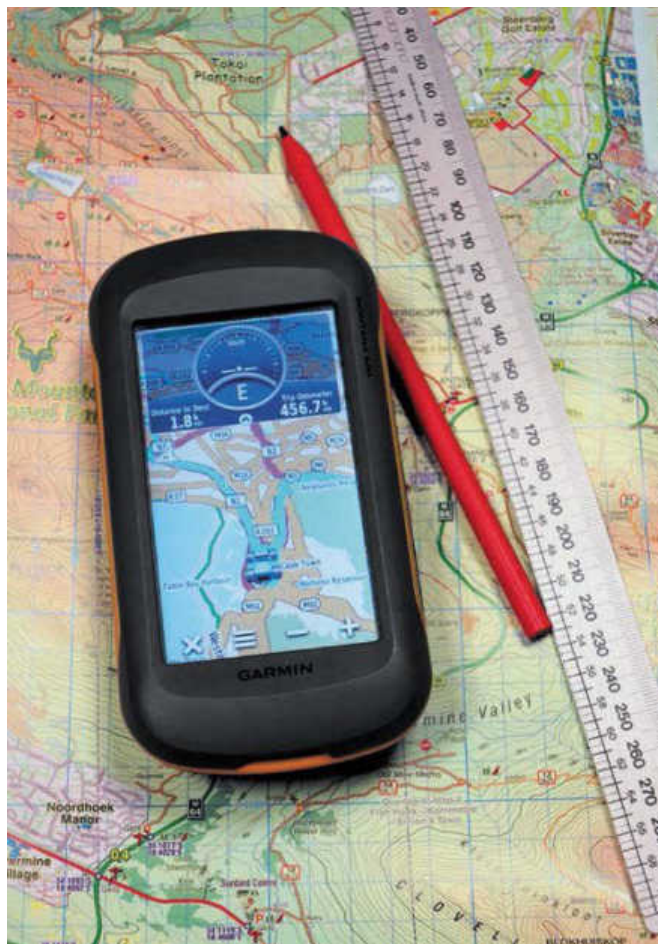
My iPad Mini is great for reference apps. I have the Tracks4Africa Guide on it, so I can orientate myself on something similar to a paper map, but with all the advantages of digital.

You can also load something like MotionX, which allows you to cache different maps and satellite images – great when you travel where normal reference maps offer little or no information.

I also have my birding and stargazer apps on the iPad, so I save space on books, and it's great for taking pictures of park maps at reception offices. These photos can be used as basic maps of the parks.

Lifesavers

SPOT tracking devices are new on our market. They are well-established abroad, but the satellite coverage was only recently extended to Africa. It's a fairly inexpensive device



which allows you to send a GPS location via satellite to a server so people know where you are. It also has help buttons that you can configure to send distress calls to people via e-mail or SMS.

The smartphone I travel with is primarily used for communication and some photography. But I have one that can take a local SIM card in every country. This way, I keep in touch via Whatsapp, SMS and e-mail, and I'm connected in emergencies. I also load the mapping and navigation apps that I have on my iPad to the smartphone as a backup.

In charge

As I've mentioned before,

RAM mounts rule. There's a RAM mount for every device and they're great to keep your gadgets mounted safely in your vehicle. Remember that all of these devices require power, mostly via USB. So if you're going to invest in some new gadgets this Christmas, make sure you have enough sockets in your vehicle.

I installed dedicated USB chargers from Blue Sea in mine. They run off the main battery and are separately fused. I have one in each corner of the cab so that the passengers are also happy. It's no use if your shiny new tablet and GPS work in the car, but the kids are jumping through the roof because they can't watch a movie on theirs! 📺

“My iPad Mini is great for reference apps. I have the Tracks4Africa Guide on it, so I can orientate myself on something similar to a paper map.”

Johann Groenewald is co-founder and director of Tracks4Africa. For more ramblings on overland navigation, go to blog.tracks4africa.co.za.

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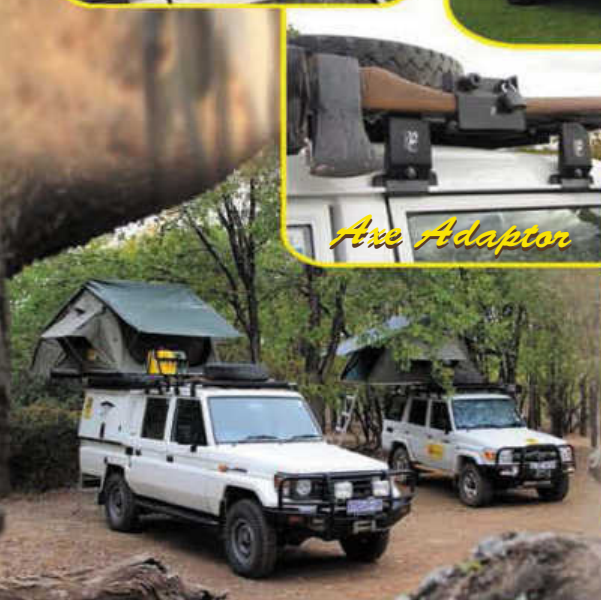
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News Flash



MERCEDES-BENZ GLE COUPÉ

Big, fast and furious

Watch out, BMW X6, here comes the Mercedes-Benz GLE Coupé. When BMW came up with its X5 at the turn of the century, there wasn't any other vehicle with which you could really compare it. Yes, it was four-wheel drive, but it was also very sporty and its handling surpassed that of most sedans. In 2001 I had the privilege of driving one in anger around the Old Nürburgring, or Nordschleife, in Germany and it was pretty obvious why BMW decided to refer to it as a Sports Activity Vehicle rather than a Sports Utility Vehicle.

Make no mistake, the X5 was never meant to be an off-

roader. Rather, it was a sporty station wagon with a high roofline and the safety of four-wheel drive on the slippery, icy winter roads of Europe and North America.

But in 2008, just when some people started to get bored with the X5, BMW came up with the X6, essentially a coupé version of the X5.

That's why it's strange that Mercedes-Benz, which has a vehicle in almost every conceivable segment, only recently launched the GLE Coupé as a direct competitor to the X6. But looking at the photographs it's obvious that Merc did their homework.

Imagine how good this vehicle

will look in black with a blue light on the roof!

The models available here will consist of an entry-level GLE 350d turbo-diesel that develops 190 kW and 620 Nm, the GLE 450 AMG that develops 270 kW and 520 Nm – and the slightly batty AMG GLE 63 S that develops an almighty 430 kW and 900 Nm.

The prices vary from just over R1 million for the 350d, to a tad under R2 million for the AMG GLE 63 S. That's without any of the tempting optional extras. Just pick a few of those and watch how the price rises like the dial on a rev counter.

– Jaco Kirsten

HYUNDAI TUCSON

Safe, safer, Tucson

The new Hyundai Tucson (which is really just the all-new iX35), whose international launch we attended (*Drive Out* #94), looks like it's more than just a pretty face because of the all safety accolades it is receiving.

In the USA the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) gave the Tucson its 2015 Top Safety Pick +1 Award and in the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP), it got a five-star rating.

The new Tucson will be on sale locally in the first quarter of 2016. The engines will consist of a 2,0 petrol engine (115 kW and 196 Nm), a 1,7 litre diesel turbo (85 kW and 280 Nm), as well as a 1,6 litre petrol turbo (130 kW and 265 Nm).

– Jaco Kirsten



PHOTOS: PROVIDED

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THE WINNER IS...

Once a year we put our heads together and engage in some spirited debates to determine **which vehicles made the biggest impression** on us this past year – or have continued to impress us.



It's that time of year again, when we decide which 4x4s we consider to be the best in their segment. But unlike other Car of the Year awards, we don't simply look at new vehicles introduced in the past year. We consider everything that's currently on sale in every segment, mainly because we believe that's what you would do when buying a new vehicle.

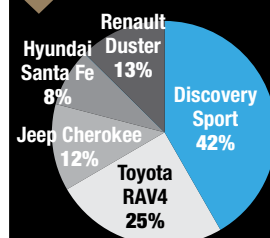
With the exception of a few segments – especially SUV of the Year – off-road capability was heavily-weighted

when making our decisions. That's because our readers don't really care about a vehicle's lap time around a race track. Practicality plays a much bigger role and most of our choices have better off-road capability than the other vehicles in their segment.

We know that readers always discuss our choices at length, and disagree with us here and there. Just remember, we've driven each and every one of these vehicles as well as their competition.



SOFT ROADER



Readers' choice on [f](#)

SOFT ROADER OF THE YEAR

Land Rover Discovery Sport SD4 HSE Luxury

Call it the new Freelander if you will. However you look at it, the Discovery Sport is a soft roader with a bit of a tough side.

In this segment there are a few vehicles that can lay claim to the crown of Soft Roader of the Year. Think of the Jeep Cherokee and Hyundai's beautiful Santa Fe. With regards to appearance, the Discovery Sport has stiff competition. But apart from the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk, there is no other

vehicle in this segment that comes close to the Discovery Sport in terms of 4x4 ability.

This is a vehicle that will be at home next to the rugby field while Mom cheers for the kids, but will also be able to conquer a rough gravel road or an obstacle or two without giving Dad sweaty palms.

This is all thanks Land Rover's Terrain Tech that allows you to choose between different modes for various terrain like rock, mud, snow or sand.

These modes adapt the vehicle's accelerator reaction, gear-shift points, traction control and steering wheel responses for the terrain. Like the surprisingly capable Range Rover Evoque, Terrain Tech also helps to make up for this vehicle's lack of low range gears.

The HSE Luxury has 19-inch rims, which could limit your off-road excursions, but Land Rover allows you to swap these for 17-inch wheels.

Combine that with 212 mm of

ground clearance, the ability to drive up 40° inclines and down 45° and you are left with a vehicle that can hold its own.

Under the hood is a SD4 turbo-diesel engine with 140kW and 470Nm. Numbers like these from a relatively small 2.2litre engine will even make the owners of some double cab bakkies jealous. Combine this with the Discovery Sport's excellent off-road capability, its clever technology, super-luxurious interior and extremely sexy appearance, and you can see why it gets the title of Soft Roader of the Year.

— Gerrie van Eeden



DOUBLE CAB OF THE YEAR

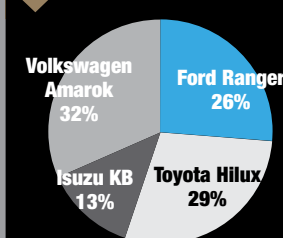
Ford Ranger 3.2 TDCi XLT

If we had to base this segment purely on bakkie sales, the Ranger would have walked away with the honours long ago, especially if you take into account the fact that Ford has been selling more double cab 4x4s to the leisure market than

any of its competitors.

We can't argue with the masses that are queuing up to buy the new Ranger. We also can't argue with the fact that the appearance of the new Ranger makes many other bakkies hang their heads in shame. This means

DOUBLE CAB BAKKIE



Readers' choice on [f](#)

that the Ranger already leads in two categories. So what about the rest?

Well, the 3.2litre Duratorq turbo-diesel engine has already proven itself. It may not be the most refined turbo-diesel engine on the market, but the engine does what is expected of it. The engine still produces an impressive 147 kW and 470 Nm, but now with slightly better fuel consumption.

The big improvement under the skin is the gearbox. Ford's also

switched to electronic power steering. Where you previously had to put your shoulder into turning the hydraulic power steering, you can now almost do it with just two fingers.

The new Ranger also has technology such as adaptable cruise control (it can maintain a constant distance between you and the vehicle in front of you via radar), cameras and computers to help you keep the vehicle in its lane, and the new SYNC2 media and infotainment system. This kind of technology was previously only seen in luxury SUV's, but Ford has drawn the line in the sand with the new Ranger. Now the question is: how good will the new Hilux be? Because it will have to give its all to dethrone the new, improved Ranger.

— Gerrie van Eeden



SUV OF THE YEAR

Ford Everest XLT

The Toyota Fortuner has ruled this segment for a long time, with monthly sales often topping 1 000 vehicles. Not only is it a great overall package, but it hasn't seen any real competition in its market. Worthy competitors have come along, like the Mitsubishi Pajero Sport and the Chevrolet Trailblazer, but not one of them has made a real dent in the famous Fortuner's popularity in South Africa.

When we nominated the Mitsubishi Pajero Sport 2.5 Di-D as the SUV of the year in 2014 we predicted that the new Ford Everest would cause an upset in this category (*Drive Out* #86). And that is exactly what has happened.

The Everest is a huge

improvement on its predecessor, which was not only an ugly duckling, but a vehicle sitting on a primitive chassis, still using leaf springs on the rear axle.

The new Everest has taken a giant technological leap forward and improved its looks as well.

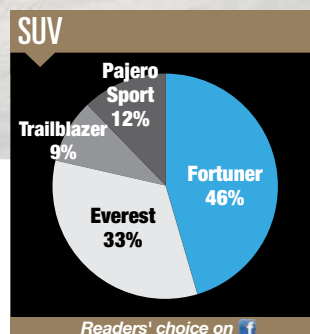
It follows the trusty recipe of full-time four-wheel drive with rear diff-lock and a low range gearbox. But with its Terrain Management off-road driving system, similar to Land Rover's Terrain Response, the Everest allows you to choose between various off-road settings, e.g. Rock or Mud, at the turn of a knob. The Everest is the first vehicle in its segment to make use of this technology.

Other features include 225 mm ground clearance, hill

descent and ascent assistance, as well as a class leading 800 mm wading depth, giving you a 4x4 that's both capable and smart.

We're a bit sceptical about the 18-inch rims on the XLT (20-inch on the top-spec Limited). Tyres of this size are vulnerable to sharp rocks. It could also leave you in the lurch if you lose a tyre far from your local SupaQuick, since these sizes aren't as widely available as 16 or 17-inch tyres (and they're a lot more expensive).

The Everest's cabin is luxurious and practical. Like the Ranger, it also gets electronic power steering instead of hydraulic assistance, so parking and manoeuvring is a breeze. The cabin is remarkably quiet –



thanks to a system that monitors noise and counters it with sound waves – and the third row of seats folds neatly into the boot floor when you're not using them. We also think the instrument panel and touch screen are by far the most comprehensive in this class.

The Everest uses the same 3,2 litre Duratorq engine as the Ranger. Its power output of 147 kW is the best in this class and its torque (470 Nm) second best. Only the Trailblazer's 2,8 Duramax engine beats it, with 500 Nm.

So, of all the bakkie-based SUVs, we think the Everest strikes the best balance between power, comfort, luxury and good off-roading capabilities. That's why it's our choice for SUV of the Year.

– Charles Thompson

“ *The new Everest has taken a giant technological leap forward and improved its looks as well.*

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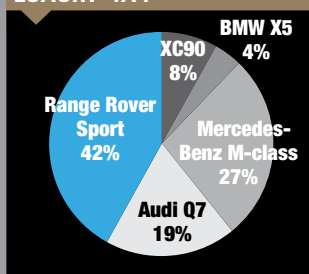


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LUXURY 4X4 OF THE YEAR

Volvo XC90

LUXURY 4X4



Readers' choice on

There are a few things that the Swedes understand. One of them is saunas; the other is vehicle safety and how to make a sports utility vehicle as luxurious as a five star hotel room.

Volvo doesn't claim the XC90 has the most luxurious interior, most powerful engine or most comfortable ride. It's par for course compared to what you see in the luxury SUV segment – and expect to see if you pay nearly R1 million for a vehicle. What does make it stand out is its safety features.

The XC90's IntelliSafe technology does a few things. Apart from adaptable cruise control and a rear view camera, radar and cameras constantly monitor the road ahead of, next to and behind you for other traffic. It even monitors the sidewalk for pedestrians. It will warn you and help you to brake if somebody walks in front of the vehicle, and it automatically brakes if you turn in front of someone else.

If the nearly-impossible happens and all these systems fail to keep you on the road, there is a Safe Positioning system that tightens the seat belts to limit injuries in an accident. The seats are specially designed to absorb impact and to offer extra protection for passengers.

In SUVs this big, they've chosen frugal petrol and diesel engines. The petrol options, a T5 with one turbo-charger and the T6 with two, develop 187 kW and 350 Nm and 235 kW and 400 Nm respectively.

The diesel engine has one turbo-charger in the D4 and two in the D5. The D4 develops 140 kW and 400 Nm, while the D5 delivers 165 kW and 470 Nm. There is actually not a lot in this vehicle that disappoints, and it's an easy award to give. If you are looking for a luxury SUV, you'll be hard pressed to find one that will give you better value and more safety features than the Volvo XC90.

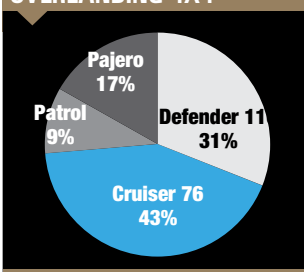
– Gerrie van Eeden



OVERLANDING 4X4 OF THE YEAR

Toyota Land Cruiser 76 Series V8 turbo-diesel

OVERLANDING 4X4



Readers' choice on

In 1984, a full 31 years ago, a couple of interesting things happened. Bruce Springsteen launched his seminal album *Born in the USA*, Zola Budd and Mary Decker had their famous coming together during the 3000m final of the Los Angeles Olympic Games – and the Toyota Land Cruiser appeared on the market. The almost unbelievable thing about it all is the fact that it hasn't been changed significantly since. Yes, it now sports coil springs at the front axle, its nose has had a facelift and the instrumentation now includes satnav.

But the basic recipe of a tough ladder-frame chassis with two solid axles hasn't really changed. And with good reason: Because it works. Because of strict regulations in Europe and America you can't buy a 70 Series Cruiser there. But Toyota sells so many of them in Africa, Asia, Australia and South America that it's still profitable to build them. Users include mines, the military, construction companies and 4x4 enthusiasts.

In fact, if you were to get hold of a poly-graph machine and ask any group of 4x4 enthusiasts to pick a 4x4 for a Cape-to-Cairo journey where their lives will depend on the vehicle's mechanical reliability, 99 % will answer "a Land Cruiser".

The 4,5litre 1VD-FTV V8 turbo-diesel with its 151 kW and 430Nm is a peach. Now you have an almost unstoppable 4x4 station wagon with solid axles, two diff locks and an engine that allows you to cruise comfortably at 140 km/h the whole day if the road (and the absence of traffic cops) allows it.

Its only real competitors are the Nissan Patrol and Mercedes-Benz G300 CDI Professional, but their engines either cannot compare (Patrol) or they offer too little for their price (G Class).

Yes, Toyota does insist on 50ppm diesel, but everyone knows that it won't spontaneously blow up if you use normal diesel now and then. Ask any owner of a Land Cruiser 200 that has almost the same engine.

For its price of R661 100, there is simply no other vehicle in the world that can beat it as Overlanding 4x4 of the Year.

– Jaco Kirsten





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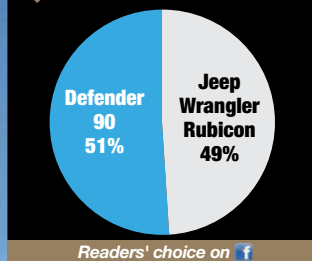


Vehicle specifications may vary for the South African market.

MOST CAPABLE 4X4 OF THE YEAR

Jeep Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited

MOST CAPABLE 4X4



There are two types of 4x4 enthusiasts in life: Those who know how incredible a Jeep Wrangler Rubicon is over rough terrain – and those who still have to find out.

The recipe is simple: Take a vehicle with a powerful 3,6 litre petrol V6, ladder-frame chassis, solid axles and two diff locks – and stand back. Oh yes, and then there's another party trick in the form of the sway bar that can be disconnected in low range by merely pressing a button, enabling some truly impressive wheel articulation.

For most off-road applications a diesel engine is great, but turbo-diesels usually develop their peak torque at a certain engine speed – more or less from 1 800 – 2 000 r/min. Powerful petrol engines (the Rubicon's engine develops 209 kW and 353 Nm) have the

advantage of very linear power and torque curves. In other words, there's already a lot of torque available at idle speed, and it keeps on seamlessly increasing as you gradually increase the throttle.

The Wrangler is also living proof of just how badly Land Rover messed up with the Defender, which reached the end of its life earlier this year. The company never continued with incremental improvements – until stricter European safety requirements led to it being discontinued. In America this has been the case since 1993.

With the Wrangler, Jeep has managed to improve and refine each subsequent generation, without sacrificing any off-road ability, even improving on it. How many other manufacturers can say the same?

Shortcomings? The cargo space is rather tight, and there's quite a lot of wind noise at 120 km/h. But the interior is modern enough that you can forgive its few shortcomings. After all, this is one seriously capable off-roader.

The new Wrangler will be unveiled in 2017 and according to Mark Allen, Jeep's design chief, it will still have solid axles. But Jeep lovers will have two added benefits: a 3.0 turbo-diesel and a double cab derivative.

Until then, the current Wrangler will keep wearing the crown as one of the most capable (or is it unstoppable?) 4x4s that money can buy. Just like the Land Cruiser, it is living proof of the fact that sometimes old school is still cool.

– Jaco Kirsten





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Join a self-drive guided tour from southern Botswana to Victoria Falls with Drive Out Tours, in conjunction with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures.

THE ITINERARY

This safari starts in southern Botswana at the town of Letlhakane and ends at Kasane in the north. We travel from Makgadikgadi Pans, skirt the southern reaches of the Okavango Delta, drive north along the Okavango River into Namibia via Tsodilo Hills, follow the Chobe River eastwards and take in the majestic Victoria Falls.

DAY 1: We meet in Letlhakane and drive to Makgadikgadi Pans, where we spend the night on Lekhubu Island.

DAY 2: Early birds and keen photographers will relish watching the sun rise over the pans while enjoying coffee and rusks. After breakfast we hike around the island with its fascinating rock formations and baobabs while the logistics team strikes camp. Then it's time to head north to our overnight camp outside Maun.

DAY 3: We spend the morning in Maun to do some shopping and to fill up the fuel tanks. There's an opportunity for an hour-long flight over the delta (R1 000, not included in the tour price). Then we depart

for our next overnight stop on the banks of one of the delta's main channels. The logistics team will have set up camp and the chef's pots will be simmering.

DAY 4: After a few days' driving it's time to relax. We have a late start with a big brunch. The camp is known for birding, including the resident Pel's Fishing Owl. In the late afternoon, we explore the waterways of the Okavango Delta on a boat cruise in comfortable aluminium speed boats on the waterways of the Pan Handle.

DAY 5: We head north into Namibia via Tsodilo Hills with their magnificent rock art. Here, we visit the museum and enjoy a picnic lunch. Our camp site for the next three nights is a shady camp on the banks of the Okavango River.

DAY 6: We enjoy a big brunch and then you're free to explore on your own or relax in the camp. Go for a game drive in the nearby Bwabwata National Park, do some bird watching, go on a dug-out canoe trip, do a village tour or cast a line in the water. We meet in the late afternoon for a sundowner cruise. (The cruise is the only activity for the day included in the price.)

DAY 7: We do game and bird watching in Bwabwata National Park's Mahango Core Area, which is home to large numbers of roan and sable antelope. Lunch is enjoyed at a picturesque picnic spot. Then it's back to camp to relax or explore some of the reserve's numerous 4x4 trails.

DAY 8: We break camp and drive to our next camp just outside Kasane, on the banks of the Chobe River, where we'll stay for the last three nights of our adventure.

DAY 9: After breakfast we go on a bus trip to the Victoria Falls. After taking in this wonder, we have a picnic lunch, do some sight-seeing and shopping in the village of Victoria Falls. For the brave of heart, there are a number of adventure activities such as bungee jumping and helicopter flights (not included in the tour price).

DAY 10: We do a game drive in an open safari vehicle through Chobe National Park and a sunset cruise on the river.

DAY 11: It's time to say our goodbyes.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

2016 TOUR DATES: 21-31 March;
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In the forgotten valley

The Gamtoos Valley is often overshadowed by its famous neighbour, the Baviaans. But a gravel road adventure in the less-popular valley is an equally enjoyable experience, says **Adél Groenewald**.

The sun is already setting by the time we turn off the N2 at Humansdorp to drive inland. A more exciting gravel road to Patensie beckons, but I'm still saddled with my little Ford Figo and its tiny wheels, so I choose to take the tar road into the town instead. The black silhouettes of the mountains rise higher and higher as we drive into the valley. The shoulder of the road disap-

pears, as do the streetlights as the twists and bends become sharper. Lorries loaded with freshly picked and neatly packed fruit pay little heed to the barrier lines on the road and we swerve every time one rumbles past us.

When we finally drive into Patensie, the town is cloaked in darkness. It seems that the things I heard about it are true – it doesn't look like much more than a petrol stop before the Baviaans.

WATERY CROSSINGS. On the way to Kouga Dam, you cross the Gamtoos River. The bridge is seldom so flooded but it adds to the scenery.



The beauty of Gamtoos. One minute you're surrounded by nature, and the next by farms. This crossing sees as many tractors as it does 4x4s.

Deeper into the unknown

With the coming of sunrise the following morning, the darkness of the tiny town gives way to waves of green. I sit on the *stoep* of Tropical Eden Villas, where we over-nighted, and enjoy the early morning view with a hot cup of coffee in hand.

Where the landscape is flat, it is covered with citrus-laden orchards. Between them, forested hills reach for the heavens and a range of crinkled mountaintops stretch across the horizon.

We meet Kobus Kok at Padlang's, a farm stall on the R331 just north-west of the town. Oom Kobus, as he is known, is the chairman of Gamtoos Tourism, and he is not too impressed with my

comment that his hometown is known as little more than a petrol stop.

Oom Kobus is going to drive us around for two days in his Hilux and show us the secrets of the Gamtoos Valley. A few of his colleagues and their friends are coming with – it's a chance to get to know their own backyard a little better. You couldn't ask for a better tour guide, because Oom Kobus grew up here.

Here at Padlang's you can get fresh, steaming *roosterkoek* instead of bread; bacon, eggs and strong coffee. With such a feast and the warm morning's winter sun, our group quickly becomes friends.

Our goal: To see why this valley, which is mostly known for its fruit farming, is a *lekker*

place to kick up some dirt.

Gamtoos' Simba chips

"For me, what makes the Gamtoos Valley so remarkable is that you have the beauty of the Baviaans without its isolation. Plus, the fruit farms make for extra variety," says Oom Kobus, and the farmers here cultivate cucumbers, strawberries and potatoes. If you see "Patensie chips" on a menu, you know that they are the real deal.

I leave my little car at the farm stall, and it sticks out like a sore thumb amidst all the white farm bakkies. "There are people around here all day, no one will cause trouble," Kobus assures me as we scramble into his bakkie with him. Soon we're cruising

on the gravel roads as we attempt to feel the heartbeat of this forgotten valley.

We take the Elands River road north out of Patensie. It's steep, but easy with the bakkie. We're not heading anywhere in particular, but we want to get a bit of height so that we can have a better view over the valley.

After a bit of driving, we pull off the road. Officially, the Baviaanskloof conservation area lies to the north of us, but the fauna around us is just as wild. *Spekboom*, *melktou*, candelabra trees and aloes grow side by side, the same sort of plant life you would expect to find in the Addo National Park. But here the mountains are high, and it's like they're keeping watch

“For me, what makes the Gamtoos Valley so remarkable is that you have the beauty of the Baviaans without its isolation. Plus, the fruit farms make for extra variety.

over the patchwork of farmland that lies beneath them. After this, we retrace our steps to explore the Droëkloof and Andrieskraal gravel roads. A cement bridge takes us over the Klein River and through the cultivated land that we were just looking down on.

Every now and then we bump over a pothole and as the path gets narrower and the hills get higher, the surroundings become wilder. But now the thorn trees and fynbos are broken and varied with bright red, rocky cliffs. We drive up a small but steep hill, and suddenly the Elandsberg unfolds before us.

The low bridge over the Gamtoos River that we need to cross is flooded due to the rain. But we can clearly see the cement bottom through the water and we drive across easily. Eric Swart drives his Land Rover through after us and decides it's a good idea to make the water splash up to the vehicle's roof.

Pure plaas

Just as we're starting to feel comfortable in this wilder environment, we drive through a lane of poplars, clearly planted to protect farms from the wind. A tractor plods slowly past us, and we are immediately surrounded by farmlands again.

We follow the Gamtoos River for a few kilometres and pull off into a ravine just before the road makes a sharp turn. "It is here that the Gamtoos River starts," explains Oom Kobus. To the right, you can see how

the Groot River comes from one direction and the Kouga River from the other. Here in the gorge they meet to form this valley's distinctive artery.

Oom Kobus spreads his map across the bakkie's cab to give us context. "Officially, the valley stretches from here all the way along the river to its mouth outside of Jeffrey's. But for the sake of community, we consider the people that are a little further out as also being part of our valley."

It seems to me that everybody is welcome in this pleasant place.

Full stomachs by a full dam

A range of potato farms bring us to the Kouga Dam – the most important water source in the valley. The dam's life-giving content is pumped to the farms in the area through a canal system. The Kouga Dam even provides potable water to Port Elizabeth.

Each day it's indicated at the gate how full the dam is. Today, it reads that the dam is sitting at 100,67 % and it's overflowing. We have to cross the river on a bridge below the dam wall, and it's submerged deeper than the one that we had to tackle earlier. We cross without incident, but I notice that this time Eric doesn't play games with his Land Rover.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FRUIT BASKET (top). The Gamtoos is known for its oranges. This orchard shows off across from the Midlands warehouse.

MIND YOUR HEAD (bottom). Remember your torch if you visit Philip's Tunnel, it's covered in bat guano.

After this, a steep, rough road takes us through a narrow tunnel. It was excavated through the cliffs in 1967 when the dam was built, so as to reach the dam wall.

On the other side, a solid sheet of water thunders over the 80 m high dam wall and we stare in silence at the transparent rainbow that hangs in the air. The massive body of water that makes up the dam looks ominous and grey where it pools at the foot of the Kouga Mountains.

After we've stood and appreciated the view for some

time, we drive to a beautiful picnic spot next to the river. It's only once we've left the thundering water behind us that I realise how loudly my stomach is grumbling.

The picnic site is covered with big trees, and it's empty when we visit it now in the middle of the week. We have the whole place to ourselves while we enjoy a cup of coffee with our egg, ham and cheese sandwiches

Alone for a night

After our picnic we head to the Tia Ghee tented camp, our accommodation for the night. "Tia Ghee" means "secluded" in the language of the Khoi, and that is exactly what we have planned for tonight – to be away from everything for a while.

About 9 km before Patensie, we turn off the R331 and drive deep into an indigenous forest. We cross about 10



streams, and although there isn't much game around here, we still see a duiker. The nimble animal is just visible between the branches for a few seconds before he makes himself scarce again.

Every now and then the branches touch the sides of the bakkie, and we progress slowly. You can try tackle this road from the dam to the tented camp with a 4x2 if it's dry, but definitely not after it's rained.

Eventually we spot green safari tents between the trees. The great thing about Tia Ghee is that the tents are permanently set up here. The camp has flush toilets in neat wooden houses and there is warm water for showering. But there is no cellphone signal or electricity, which gives you that solitary feeling.

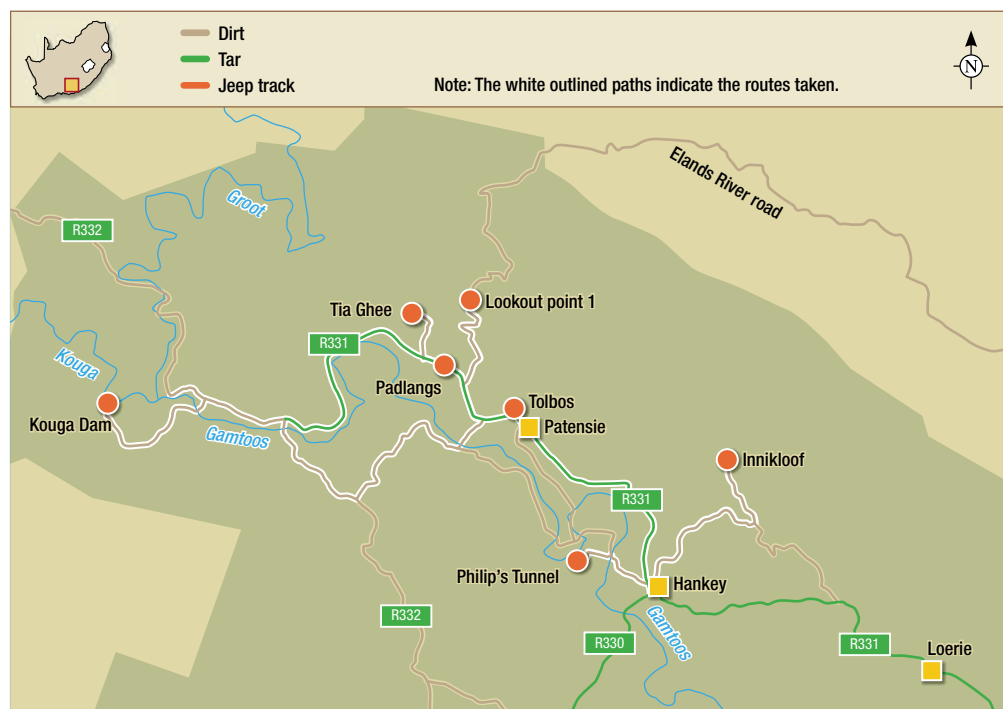
A rain spider disappears quickly as one of the men opens a door, but the shivers down my spine are forgotten when a bottle of lemon liqueur is opened, and old and new friends start swapping stories around the camp fire.

Oom Kobus' wife, Estelle, tells us that they have been managing the camp for ten years already. "We manage it on a case-by-case basis, depending on what the visitors need. Some people don't want to worry about cooking and then we come in and cook for them, others want to be left entirely alone to enjoy the peaceful, natural surroundings and birdlife."

The Kok's also look for the most solitary camp sites when they travel to places like the Kalahari and Richtersveld – where they can avoid the boisterous tour groups.

A tunnel with a story

After a restful night in nature, we wake up to do one more important trip in the valley, to an out-of-the-way tunnel that is carved right through one of the valley's mountains. One last gravel road on this side of



Hankey will take us there.

After we've parked the vehicles, we walk through long grass and thick shrubs to get to the tunnel. It's covered in bat guano and our cellphones shine weak lights on the conglomerate of rocks balancing above our heads. John Philip, a farmer, decided in 1842 that it would be easier for him to get water to his farm if it could be transported *through* the mountain standing between him and the Kouga Dam. So he sent workers with primitive hand tools to start chipping away at either side

of the mountain.

It took them two years, but eventually they met somewhere in the middle, and thus completed the tunnel. Everyone celebrated the project's success, but two weeks later, poor Philip drowned in the Gamtoos River.

From the tunnel we follow the road back through Hankey's informal settlement. We climb back onto the R331 to Patensie and stop off at Tolbos, another favourite farm stall and shop.

When I climb back into my little car and head home,

I realise that I wouldn't have discovered all these treasures with my preconceived ideas about Patensie and its valley.

The Gamtoos is definitely not just a petrol stop on the road to the Baviaans, but it's also not going to hold your hand and guide you to all its hidden gems.

Here you have to look for the beauty yourself and keep your eyes open for every view. If you don't know how to get to Philip's tunnel or Kouga Dam, stop at Padlang's, eat a *roosterkoek* and ask someone with a farm bakkie. 🚗

I WANT TO GO TOO!

BEST TIME TO GO: The gravel roads and rivers are flooded in some places after the rainy season (October to March), but the surroundings are beautiful all year round.

WHAT DID YOU DRIVE? A Toyota Hilux 4x4 double cab.

FUEL CONSUMPTION? 12,6 litre/100 km.

CONDITIONS OF THE ROADS? The gravel roads were in a good condition during my visit. The low bridges only flood if it's rained more than usual.

CELLPHONE RECEPTION: Good in the towns, but bad further from the developed areas.

BEST PLACES TO SEE GAME? Apart from a few buck around the Tia Ghee camp site, there isn't much game

in the area.

ACCOMMODATION:

Tropical Eden Villas Patensie: Self-catering from R300 p.p.

☎ 042 283 0801; ☎ 082 933 1400;

✉ info@patinvestprop.net

Tia Ghee tented camp: Self-catering from R200p.p.p.n. out of season R220 in season. Including meals R430 to R470 p.p.p.n. ☎ 042 283 0739

☎ 072 377 2525 ✉ info@tiaghee.co.za

FUEL: You can fill up in Patensie and Hankey.

NOTE: If you want to visit the Kouga Dam during the week, you need to book before the time so that someone can open the gate for you.



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Share your #vwkombi memories, moments and photos with us.



Das Auto.

The Running of the Bull Dust

This year was the biggest and most *lekker* Bull Run yet. What follows here is a collection of photos – and one or two reflections on those three amazing days.

PHOTOS: EVAN NAUDÉ



Away to the left of where we're standing underneath a gazebo on the Vosburg Pan, we can hear a deep mechanical rumble approaching at speed. It turns out to be people in funny costumes drag racing one another in two old Mercedes-Benzes. To my right, sitting on a cooler box and sipping his whisky, one guy shouts excitedly: "It's like a matric weekend, but for guys with wheels!" And while you're at it, you might as well add an intervarsity, a rally, a weekend of camping and a Mad Max movie (albeit without the violent, bloody bits), if you want a more accurate description of what exactly the Bull Run involves.

Sometime later, while Saturday's activities are really gathering pace, Henk van Niekerk, an entrepre-

neur from Grabouw on whose Tankwa Karoo farm the annual Africa Burn is held, proudly stands next to his generator and big speakers. "Yes, one can play very loud music, but on one condition – it must be *lekker* music!" he says, while David Kramer's "Meisie sonder sokkies" is pumping through the speakers.

This year's Bull Run is the fourth since Hermie Koen and Rieger van Rooyen came up with the silly idea of getting some cars – older than 30 years and costing less than R25 000 – and then setting off to a remote area where they could let their hair down.

Where last year's Bull Run had 95

teams, this year a total of 121 cars with 348 contestants entered the event.

This leaves you with just over 2,8 contestants per car. It makes you think of the Ford Fairlane that was about to start Friday's "rally" with two live chickens and a five-year old boy on the boot – the chickens in a pen and the boy in a carry cot – both fastened with cable ties. Moments after people looked at them in horror, they laughingly got out and made the boy sit between them in the car, because the fun and pranks at the Bull Run never end.

Now, after digesting everything, one can try to make sense of those three mad days in the Vosburg district of the Karoo. How do you fully explain the Bull Run to someone who wasn't there? Well, you can't. Maybe the words on the back of this year's official t-shirt say it best: "What happens in Vosburg, stays in Vosburg."

– Jaco Kirsten





FROM THE MIDDLE EAST (top left). From the moment the Arm Biere from Standerton rolled into Vosburg in the AfQaki Limo, they showed bucket-loads of spirit at the event.

RUNNING FROM THE LAW (top right). The Stander Gang from Krugersdorp also made an appearance at the Bull Run.

VIVA MEXICO! (centre). Team Waksie flew the Mexican flag, and ponchos, in Waksie, their 1975 Toyota Cressida.

PORTABLE JACUZZI (below). The Loodgieters from Gordons Bay had installed working plumbing on their car to help cool down their extra passenger in the back.





READY, AIM, LAUNCH (left). The Moonshiners from Mossel Bay compete in the dung spitting challenge.

NO SHOWER FOR HERBIE (top left). The 4RUSTIX team tried their best to bring the dirtiest car to this year's event.

VOSBURG FANTASY (top right). André, PJ and Cobus Coetzee arrived as characters from the *Lord of the Rings* in Gandalf, their 1970 Toyota Corona MK2.

TOM AND JERRY (centre right). Pierre de la Rey and Ivan Rademeyer chase each other round a 1959 Morris Minor 1000.

IN DUST WE TRUST (bottom right). The 1980 Chevrolet Senator of team Sommer Net kicked up a proper dust cloud.



ASSEMBLY (top). Since the inception of the Bull Run in 2011, the event has grown from 11 to 120 participating vehicles.

THEY HAVE THE MOVES (centre left). The wrestlers of team Rowwer as Rof turned a wrestling match into an impromptu cabaret.

DUSTY DRIFTING (centre right). The guys from We Buy Cars put their Mercedes, Herklaas, through its paces.

DOWNFORCE IN THE DRAGS (bottom). The Panspesialiste reckoned an ironing board would make the perfect spoiler for their Chevrolet.





BECOME ONE WITH THE DUST. The 1966 Panther Kallista 2.8i of team Boer en Brit slides around the drifting track. Hermie Koen and Johan Meyer (bottom right) were covered in dust after the event, but some of the other participants (top right) took pre-emptive measures against the elements. Even though the dust led to thirst, participants were breathalysed throughout (right) to keep things safe.



AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Ultimately it was Daan and Philip Morkel of the team Plaasspan in their Ford Granada that claimed top honours. To paraphrase Julius Caesar's famous words: We came, we saw, we kicked up a lot of dust – and it was *lekker*.



THANK YOU.

An event like this one wouldn't see the light of day if it wasn't for vital support. On behalf of *Drive Out*, we would like to say thank you to the following sponsors and hard workers:

- **CONTINENTAL TYRE** who sponsored prize money to the value of R20 000.
- **IRONMAN 4X4** who sponsored prizes to the value of R15 000.
- **YATO TOOLS** and Tradequip, who sponsored prizes to the value of R15 000.
- **ZARTEK** who sponsored prizes to the value of R2 000.
- **QUALIFLORA** who sponsored all the printing.
- **ALCO-SAFE** who provided breathalysers for the weekend.
- **SAFEQUIP** for their fire extinguishers that we could use during the event if we needed to and which we could hand out as prizes at the end.
- **WEBUYCARS.CO.ZA** for the printing of the participants' numbers.
- **JAN AND HANNES VAN DER WALT** from Lektratek, who gave steel drinking glasses to each participant.
- **JAMES KITLEY FROM PROCOM** for the organising and sponsorship of all the radio communication for the weekend
- **GOMAD4X4** for the road signs for the rally.
- **THYS DE JAGER, JOHANN VILJOEN** and **BURGER VAN DEN BERG** who helped with the logistics and made sure everything ran smoothly.
- Each participant, supporter and official who came to Vosburg, endured the heat and dust and made it a successful event.





WATERWORKS! The Wild Coast is hardly a dry destination with dusty tracks. The streams here are almost always flowing.

Mud and rainy skies on the Kei

When you tackle 4x4 trails on the Wild Coast and the rain starts coming down, you get a new sense of appreciation for a soft bed at the end of the day, as **Gerrie van Eeden** found out.

PHOTOS: MILEMAN MEDIA AND GERRIE VAN EEDEN

What do you get when you throw together a bunch of canary yellow Jeep Rubicons, a handful of journalists and a lot of rain on the back roads of the Wild Coast? A winning recipe for some decent off-road driving and a new found respect for the soft beds of hotels.

I learned these lessons recently when I participated in the General Tire Adventure from Kei Mouth to Mazeppa Bay during the rainy season.

Hit the road

At the front of our convoy of Jeeps are Rynhardt Stander and Koos Enslin, our tour guides from Extreme Terrain Adventures who regularly take tours on this route. With a knowing smile, Rynhardt explains exactly how tough the trail is that we are expected to do today – muddy roads, large rocky steps and river crossings that will test our skills along with the capability of the vehicle. There is also a range of beautiful views and places that not many people have seen along the way. You can't find much fault with a trip like this.

Once we've crossed the Kei River by ferry, we get to grips with the muddy dirt road. The gloomy clouds on the horizon make the Indian Ocean on our right look ominously dark. In weather like this you can understand why there are nearly as many shipwrecks on the Wild Coast as are found on the infamous West Coast. This is a remote area to boot, particularly the trails we will be driving today.

Rynhardt told us earlier that this is a special concession that they organised with local authorities and the chiefs of the old Transkei. They are the only ones who can take people on tours on the roads we will be driving. So we prepare for places that not many have seen before.

To the north of the Kei River the scenery noticeably changes from that which we are leaving behind in East London. There are no more shops or tar roads. The settlements are only a couple of shacks that are built close to each other. Here and there you can spot a telephone pole or power line. Like the rest of the Wild Coast, this is truly still untouched.

Initially we drive on a good gravel road before turning off

between two huts on a jeep track. Barely a kilometre further we find our first challenge – a steep downhill with large rock steps before we start climbing on the other side on even rockier steps. Choosing the right line is essential because with the rain that has fallen, the rocky clay is as slippery as a bar of soap. (*I know Gerrie wanted to use another word here, but this is a family magazine – Jaco*).

But it will take more than slippery rocks to stop the Jeeps, and the whole convoy is smiling as we find ourselves at the other side of the obstacle in no time. The rest of the trails throughout the day are very similar, except that the wet rocks are replaced by streams and rivers here and there, but fortunately never deeper than our calves.

The rain hasn't fallen that hard yet, but the views when we enter each new valley leave us gaping in wonder. This beauty is part of the magic of the Wild Coast. Just when you think you have seen the most beautiful view for the day, the next one comes swinging around the corner like Mike Tyson's left hook.

After a day of driving we arrive at the Wavecrest Beach Hotel in the pouring rain. The thatched roof chalets with a view of the lagoon are comfortably equipped, and a hot shower is just what the doctor ordered. Though I like camping, I'm glad that I don't have to pitch a tent and roll out a sleeping bag tonight.



JEeps FOR ALL! Because General Tire is an American brand, it is only natural that they would choose to use Jeeps for the expedition.



TRANS-KEI (top). The ferry over the Great Kei River is the only other way to cross it, apart from the road bridge on the N2.

A LITTLE TO THE LEFT (bottom). The team from Extreme Terrain Adventures and General Tire worked hard to get everyone through safely.

More rain, more beauty

The second day's route promises to be a bit more challenging. After the rain that fell yesterday, Rynhardt and Koos aren't sure whether all the trails we are supposed to drive today will still be accessible. "We will have to play it by ear," Rynhardt lets us know over the two-way radio as the convoy is heading out.

At the back of the convoy is Scott "LB" Williams, an American with a military background, who is involved with the Reserve Protection Agency (RPA) in South Africa. They are primarily tasked with preventing poaching.

Part of the RPA's job is to provide and adapt military technology from America for the local anti-poaching units. Things like night vision goggles, infrared binoculars and satellite technology to help track the animals make the task that much easier.

Scott drives a specially imported J8 Jeep, a vehicle designed for military use.

After he had nearly written-off enough tyres to start his own repair company, General Tire gave him a set of mud tyres for the Jeep. "I haven't lost a tyre since," he says in his American accent.

At each obstacle there is talk of the American way of driving, which just means that Scott doesn't hold back his right foot. "The accelerator is there to be used, and with all the gear in my Jeep, I need more momentum to reach the top," he argues.

At the start of one very long hill the convoy is stopped. "We'll walk it first rather," say Rynhardt and Koos, and halfway to the top we see why. If you so much as think about the wrong line you'll get stuck, and then the goose is cooked, because reversing down this hill is not something I want to try.

One by one we get the chance to drive up. When we reach the top, we're rewarded with an unexpected view. We

“ *I am glad that we closed the Jeep's roof earlier, because as we pull off, the mud starts flying in all directions.*

are standing on top of a hill with a river flowing into the Indian Ocean on the horizon. There are thick green forests and grassy fields covered with dark rain clouds that will not dissipate.

Luckily the rain only starts when we reach the top, but I can see Rynhardt and Koos standing around uncomfortably while everyone is taking pictures. Our next obstacle is a steep muddy hill, which will be more of a slide than anything else in this rain.

The convoy is left waiting for a while at the bottom of the hill. Rynhardt and Koos went ahead and advised us to pause a minute. Carri-Anne Kelly, a freelance journalist, is in the Jeep with me and sits behind the wheel. From where we are sitting we've chosen the perfect line and planned our strategy well, to where the road disappears around a corner halfway up the hill. Koos and Rynhardt come walking down the hill to show us a better line. "Your line would have worked, but only till you reach the corner. That is where

the real fun starts. You will just have to keep up the momentum," he advises before we set off.

I am glad that we closed the Jeep's roof earlier, because as we pull off, the mud starts flying in all directions. With enough wheel spin you can clear your tyres for better grip, in theory. Fortunately for us, the theory is proved right in practice and we reach the top without hassle.

Once the entire convoy has reached the top, we decide that if this section looks like this, the rest of the route would be completely inaccessible. From here we drive on gravel roads that take us to Mazeppa Bay.

On the cards this evening is clean bedding and a hot shower. But even if we were to sleep in tents under the stars, I would have laid down with a smile. And next time I come here, I won't mind where I sleep, just as long as I can spend all day between the green hills and tropical forests of the Wild Coast. 🇿🇦



CHOOSE WISELY (top). A Jeep Wrangler Rubicon with diff locks front and rear, is the right choice for the rough trails of the Wild Coast.

DODGE THE RAIN (bottom). The rain that fell generously on the second day made the rocks and mud very slippery and traction could become tricky. Luckily the gurus were on hand to help.

** Drive Out went along on this trip as a guest of General Tire.*

DO YOU WANT TO GO TOO?

To do this tour, or another tour of the Wild Coast with a team who knows their stuff, contact Rynhardt Stander from Extreme Terrain Adventures on ☎ 082 443 3907.





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FATHER CHRISTMAS IS LOADING THE BAKKIE!

Still not sure what you want for Christmas? Here are some cool ideas so you can start dropping hints.

What is Christmas without a bag full of recovery gear or a new first-aid kit under the tree? Here are some great gift ideas for your Christmas list (or for someone close to

you). They go from cheap to expensive and there's something for everyone. When you're done reading through them, leave the magazine somewhere Father Christmas will notice it – with a big red circle around the things you'd like to see in your stocking this year.





↑ Dash Dock Mount Kit Sit! Stay!

With a small metal disk that you stick onto the back of your phone and a magnet on your vehicle's dashboard to keep it in place you can be hands free, dude!

PRICE: R110
AVAILABLE AT: Echo 4x4



← National Luna Double Battery System Monitor Check your batteries

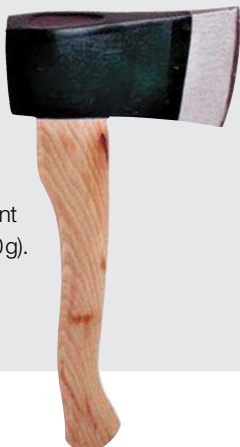
With this device you can keep an eye on both your batteries in a double battery system. You can also draw power from both batteries at once in an emergency, like when you need to use a winch.

PRICE: R489
AVAILABLE AT: Alu-Cab

→ Lasher Axe Chop it Charlie

Next to a spade and a high-lift jack, an axe is essential in the bush. The name Lasher is almost synonymous with gardening equipment and this axe is compact and light weight (900g).

PRICE: R195
AVAILABLE AT: Alu-cab



↓ GoPro 3 Way Tripod Multi-talented

If you don't want to fix your GoPro to your bakkie, buy this three-in-one stick. It's a tripod, a handle and an extension and you can use it to film someone else for a change. Rather don't use it for selfies though.

PRICE: R999
AVAILABLE AT: Cape Union Mart



↘ Desert Products 3.8 Ton Air Jack A mega-pillow for your baby

This must be one of the easiest ways of jacking up a vehicle or getting it out of a sticky situation.

PRICE: R2279
AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld





↑ Basic Recovery Kit For when the going gets tough

The right place to start when you are recovering your vehicle is not with a kinetic rope or a high-lift jack. Buy this kit with a tow rope, kinetic strap, bow shackles and gloves to start your collection of recovery gear.

PRICE: R1 850

AVAILABLE AT: LA Sport



Korr LED Camp Light Kit Let there be lights

This kit includes three LED strips, a few 3,5 m cables, dimmer switch, waterproof connectors, Velcro strips, battery clamps and 20 cable ties – all in a neat aluminium carry case.

PRICE: R1 945

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld



Savute Drawers

Best suited for SUVs.
Made with heavy duty telescopic sliders enabling full travel of the drawer.
Complete with 2 dividers, 2 drop-in boxes & 1 tip-up work surface.
Carpeted on top & inside.
Powdercoated face.
Optional fridge slider.
Lockable

OUTBACK Drawers

Best suited for LDVs.
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Alva Amacooka A kitchen on legs

With this frame for all your gas fittings, you simply screw in the gas bottle and then you have a stove in the bush. It has three gas nozzles and folds up to a compact size.

PRICE: R990

AVAILABLE AT: Outdoor Warehouse



Adventure First Aid Kit

For everything and more

With this complete first aid kit you have everything you need to stop the bleeding on the little one's knee, pull the splinter from your finger and much more.

PRICE: R650

AVAILABLE AT: Outdoor Warehouse



Zenga Torch Jet

Candle in the wind...

The South Easter can howl and the rain can fall. This small blowtorch lighter will do its job, and do it well. You can even use it to solder if necessary.

PRICE: R80

AVAILABLE AT: Outdoor Warehouse



150 W Portable Solar Panel Strong and sturdy solar power

This 150W solar panel will ensure that your batteries stay charged so you're not left in the dark holding a warm beer. It is portable, with a rip-stop canvas bag for extra protection.

PRICE: R8 000

AVAILABLE AT: Outdoor Warehouse





Braai Casserole

Keep the chops tops

How many times have you been left standing in front of a grill with cooked meat wishing that you brought your casserole along? Get an extra one now that can stay in the back of your bakkie.

PRICE: R405

AVAILABLE AT: Outdoor Warehouse



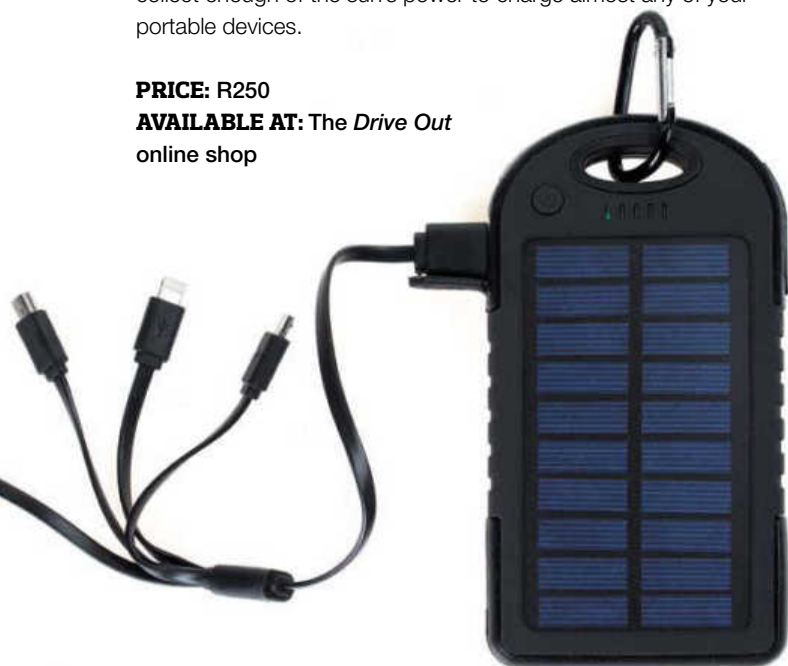
Portable Solar Charger

Power hour

This battery is only slightly bigger than a man's hand, but can collect enough of the sun's power to charge almost any of your portable devices.

PRICE: R250

AVAILABLE AT: The Drive Out online shop



GEAR | CHRISTMAS GIFTS



Silky Zubat

330 Hand Saw

The sultan of saws

Your friends might giggle when you say you're fetching your Silky saw, but you'll have the last laugh as you cleave open an overgrown jeep track with this razor sharp 330 mm hand saw.

PRICE: R795

AVAILABLE AT: Alu-cab



Zartek Za-758

Two-Way Radio

Come in Bravo 2

This radio can give you up to 800m of reception between buildings and 5km in a flat, open area. Its shell is tough enough that it won't disintegrate when the bakkie goes over a bump.

PRICE: R949

AVAILABLE AT: Trappers



Gel Cushion

Keep things comfortable

With this cushion for your car seat you can make sure the road to your holiday destination doesn't turn into a test of your endurance fit for the Old Testament.

PRICE: R950

AVAILABLE AT: The Drive Out Online Shop



Lazer St-4 LED Lights

Bright packages

This mini-lightbar might only have 4 LED's, but they produce 3470 lumen beams that can light up a distance of almost 400m. These lights come with brackets so you can mount them on your bumper or grille.

PRICE: R5 100 per light

AVAILABLE AT: Alu-Can





↑ Petzl Pouch A home for your light

It is actually only made for Petzl headlamps, but any standard size headlamp will fit in here, and is then protected from being knocked around in your luggage.

PRICE: R175

AVAILABLE AT: Cape Union Mart

→ Checkpoint 51 Piece Crockery and Cutlery Set All together now

This crockery and cutlery set has everything you need for six people, packed neatly in an ammo box.

PRICE: R1 299

AVAILABLE AT: Campworld



↓ Collapsible Basins and Buckets A kitchen in your pocket

There's a whole range of these collapsible bowls, dishes, tubs and buckets that take up very little space. Don't underestimate them – they are really sturdy when open.

PRICE: Starting from R100

AVAILABLE AT: Safari Centre



↓ ARB Compressor Air force

This baby pumps 61 litres of air per minute and the hose is 6m long. While it isn't cheap, you won't be buying another compressor anytime soon because this is the exact same compressor used for ARB's diff locks.

PRICE: R4 945

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld



← Coghlan's Binoculars Take your pick

Coghlan's multi-function binoculars will keep your kids busy for hours in nature. With different lenses and gizmos that fold in and out, it can turn into a set of binoculars, a monocular, magnifying glass, a compass, stereoscope or signal mirror.

PRICE: R119

AVAILABLE AT: Trappers





GENERAL GRABBER



General Grabber tyres are the all-terrain experts

- Grabber GT is the newly developed tyre for road-biased SUVs
- Award-winning Grabber AT is an all-round tyre with powerful traction and exceptional handling
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GENERAL TIRE



LED Lenser M7rx

See in the dark

A strong, sturdy and rechargeable LED torch is always a handy thing to have. This LED Lenser torch won't disappoint you.

PRICE: R2499

AVAILABLE AT: Cape Union Mart



Grip 'N Go Sand Tracks

Step on it!

This set of two studded sand tracks (also good in mud) can be folded up to ¼ of their extended length. They have loops with ropes so your vehicle can pull them out while getting unstuck.

PRICE: R995

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld



Lasher Panga

Make way

Sometimes shrubbery is too dense to tackle with an axe or too fine to bother with a saw. At those times you reach for a panga.

PRICE: R99

AVAILABLE AT: Alu-cab



Desert Products Tyre Repair Kit

First aid for tyres

This tough and comprehensive tubeless tyre kit is all you will need to sort out any punctured tubeless tyre.

PRICE: R295

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld



Ice Cold Cooler Boxes

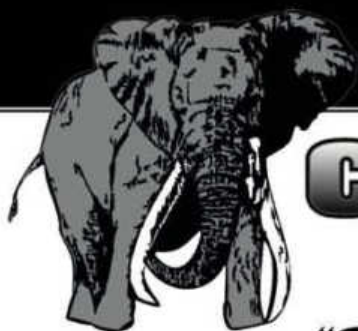
Cooler than ice

With the right cooler box you can travel for days without a fridge/freezer. These cooler boxes from Ice Kool are as tough as a badger and colder than the heart of a traffic officer. And they're available in various sizes, ranging from 10 to 200 litres!

PRICE: R1 920 (47 litre)

AVAILABLE AT: Safari Centre





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FINANCING AVAILABLE





← T-Max 20 L Jerry Can

Tiger in your tank

These steel jerry cans are stronger than any plastic product and the spout means that you won't easily spill a bit of fuel on your feet. Once you're finished filling up, you simply unscrew the spout, turn it around and insert it into the jerry can, securing it in place with the screw cap.

PRICE: R495

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld



↑ ARB Air Pressure Gauge

Measure up

A good tyre pressure gauge is one of the most valuable pieces of equipment in the bush. With an ARB product you are never going to doubt your readings.

PRICE: R242

AVAILABLE AT: 4x4 Megaworld

→ Bungee Cords and Straps

Hold on

When packing stuff in your vehicle's load bin there are always things that you don't want moving around, but you don't really want to use ratchet straps or tie downs for them. These babies, on the other hand, are elastic and can be adjusted for length in seconds, allowing you to secure a variety of objects quickly and safely inside your vehicle.

PRICE: R45 and R55

AVAILABLE AT: Safari Centre



← Stanley Bottles

Drink tanks

Tired of lukewarm coffee or a mess on your lap? These two Stanley products could just be the answer. You can choose between a stainless steel mug that will keep drinks either cold or hot for hours, or a special water bottle from a tough synthetic material that won't spill a drop when using it. So no more "Hey, hold my drink while I show you what this bakkie can do!" jokes.

PRICE: R375 (Synthetic); R290 (Stainless Steel)

AVAILABLE AT: Safari Centre



↓ Check-point Wind Straps

Cure for the Cape Doctor

These straps are basically long seatbelts and are just as strong. The set includes heavy-duty steel pegs to anchor the belts. Exactly what you need to keep a tent, awning or gazebo grounded in high winds.

PRICE: R295

AVAILABLE AT: Campworld



Ring Multi-Socket With USB **Power for everybody**

With this extension cord, plus extra sockets and a USB-port, you shouldn't have to choose between Dad's GPS and Junior's iPad on the open road.

PRICE: R215

AVAILABLE AT: Echo 4x4



LED Worklight **This is the future!**

LED lights are probably the cleverest invention since sliced bread. This one has a built-in battery that you can recharge with your vehicle's cigarette lighter socket or a wall plug.

PRICE: R680

AVAILABLE AT: Opposite Lock



Drive Out Bush Shirt **The bush boss**

These bush shirts are made of pure cotton with triple stitching on the seams that take the worst beating. There's a double layer of material over the shoulder area, where the sun always hits you the hardest.

PRICE: From R340

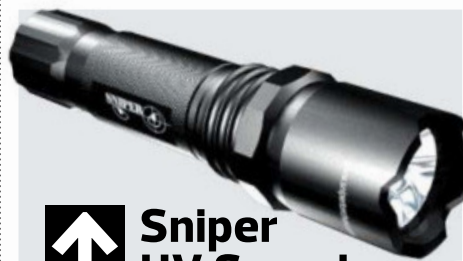
AVAILABLE AT: The Drive Out Online Shop

Zappemdead Electric Racket **Judge, Jury, Executioner**

Bring out your inner Rafael Nadal! This racket has a wire mesh that you run a strong current through at the touch of a button. It zaps mosquitoes so hard that it turns them into a blue spark instantly. Poof!

PRICE: R149

AVAILABLE AT: Trappers



Sniper UV Scorpion Torch **Find those critters**

Scorpions are hard enough to spot during the day. At night it's virtually impossible. But not with this torch! With its UV light, it makes them shine bright purple.

PRICE: R349

AVAILABLE AT: Trappers



Escape Gear Seat Covers **Protect your seat**

Escape Gear is one of the most well-known manufacturers of seat covers in the country. Their covers are available in two materials: 510g cotton canvas and Airotech material, a type of woven linen.

PRICE: From R3950

AVAILABLE AT: Alu-Cab

GET THESE PRODUCTS FROM:

4X4 MEGAWORLD:
www.4x4megaworld.co.za

ALU-CAB:
www.alu-cab.co.za

CAMPWORLD:
www.campworld.co.za

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www.capeunionmart.co.za

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www.oppositelock.co.za
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www.outdoorwarehouse.co.za
SAFARI CENTRE:
www.safaricentre.co.za

TRAPPERS:
www.trappers.co.za
DRIVE OUT ONLINE SHOP:
www.winkelweg.co.za

**All prices were correct when going to print and are subject to change.*



TEXT: EVAN NAUDÉ **PHOTOS:** MICHAEL STEYN

From wreck to warrior

When Michael Steyn bought an old Patrol at a salvage auction, his initial plan was to restore and then sell it. But this particular machine crept into his heart, and after a special restoration he now has a beast of an off-roader.

Michael Steyn from Centurion is a geographic information system specialist for TomTom, so he doesn't get lost easily. Since he repairs and sells damaged vehicles in his spare time, he also knows his way around an engine pretty well.

One day he bought a Nissan Patrol at a salvage auction and fell in love with this 4x4 even before he started working on it. With its engine destroyed, the Nissan cost just over R47 000.

With a bit of ingenuity and a few Saturdays' worth of work, Michael had a functioning vehicle. All for less than R70 000.

How was the engine when you found it?

It wasn't a pretty picture. At some stage someone did a Safari turbo conversion, but I don't believe everything was 100%. It is probably what led to the death of the engine.

It had overheated and blown the head gasket, the cylinder

head and four pistons were cracked and there were chafe marks in the sleeves. The diesel pump and injectors also had to be replaced.

How did you repair it?

My first big task was to get the engine out of the vehicle. I had to park the nose of the Patrol in the garage, lift the engine out with a chain block that was tied to the rafters and push the vehicle out again. That alone took a whole Saturday.

Then I took the whole engine apart and sent the engine block to an engineering company.

After 237 000km the crank shaft was still 100% within specification, but the block received a new set of cylinder linings and proper turbo-specification pistons.

While the engineers were busy with the engine block I started working on another big task. In the old days they called it "blue-printing" and it was very popular amongst the guys who



UGLY DUCKLING. With a blown gasket, four cracked pistons and chafe marks in the sleeves, this Patrol engine needed someone in a super-hero cape to fix it. And then Michael Steyn stepped in.



BRAGGING RIGHTS. With heaps of ingenuity and a load of patience, this engine not only looked better, but also performed much better by the time that Michael was finished with it.

souped-up their engines.

It wasn't necessary to do it, but I wanted to make the engine as reliable as possible and I wanted it to work as efficiently as possible.

The most important things I did were the following:

- All the pistons were weighed with a laboratory scale and made to be the same weight.
- The distance of the piston protrusion was measured so they could all be exactly the same.

The intake and exhaust ports were gas flowed (polished) and the intake and exhaust manifolds were adjusted to correspond 100 % with the exhaust

ports in the cylinder head. It makes the gasses flow in and out of the engine much better.

- The turbo's exhaust housing was also adjusted so it corresponds 100 % with the exhaust manifold.

Putting everything together took a long time, since I wanted to do it perfectly. It took several hours to install the diesel pump and get the timing and flow settings right. I did a lot of research on the ideal specifications that the Australians use and set mine accordingly.

After I put the engine back in the vehicle, the next important step was the installation of an intercooler. I didn't want to put one on top of the engine, but rather on the front bumper. There you get much better air flow and you can also fit a bigger intercooler.

The biggest one I could find was 600x300x76mm. I bought a 63mm mild steel pipe and had it bent the way I wanted. It took two days to mount the intercooler and do the pipework.

The next step was the exhaust system. I used a 76mm (3-inch) pipe from front to back without any silencers. It gives the vehicle a very nice roar and the six cylinder diesel engine's noise makes you feel like you are driving a truck. It also has other benefits, like helping the turbos kick in earlier and lowering your exhaust gasses.

After I sorted out all the hardware, I had to make sure I wouldn't break the engine and undo all my hard work. I installed a Madman Engine Monitoring System with which I can monitor the exhaust gas temperature, oil pressure, oil temperature, water temperature and water level. Along with that,

I also mounted a boost gauge to keep an eye on the turbo.

What was the hardest task?

Working with the engine. It is a huge chunk of iron and weighs about 300kg. I had to remove it from the vehicle, rebuild and put it all back on my own. I usually use an engine stand, but this one was so heavy I had to put it together on the ground.

What advice would you give to others wanting to do such a project?

Plan your costs wisely. Patrol parts are scarce and I only know of one person selling second hand parts in South Africa. Make very sure the engine is in a good condition and that the vehicle has a service record.

How much did the rebuild cost you? What would it have cost if you hadn't done it yourself?

The project was very cheap, but I got a big discount since I know someone who could get me cheaper prices. The cost comparison is in the table below.

Are you happy with the end result?

Absolutely! I not only wanted to build something with as much power as possible, but also something that has a good balance between power, reliability and fuel consumption. With 0,8 bar boost from the turbo, the engine now generates 140kW and 430Nm torque compared to the 85kW and 264Nm of the standard version. My fuel consumption is 13,3litre/100km on the open road. When the engine works hard – like when I tow – it falls to 16,12litre/10km. 🚗

Component	Personal	Shop price
Cylinder head	R5 123,81	R11 300
Parts	R6 430	R10 346
Engineering work	R5 758,80	R5 758
Pumps and injectors	R5 271,90	R5 271,90
Labour	R0,00	R6 000
Total	R22 584,51	R38 675,90



The spring in your step

How does a leaf spring differ from a coil spring? And why are heavy duty springs not necessarily better than standard springs? The 4x4 Professor explains.

BY: GERRIE VAN EEDEN

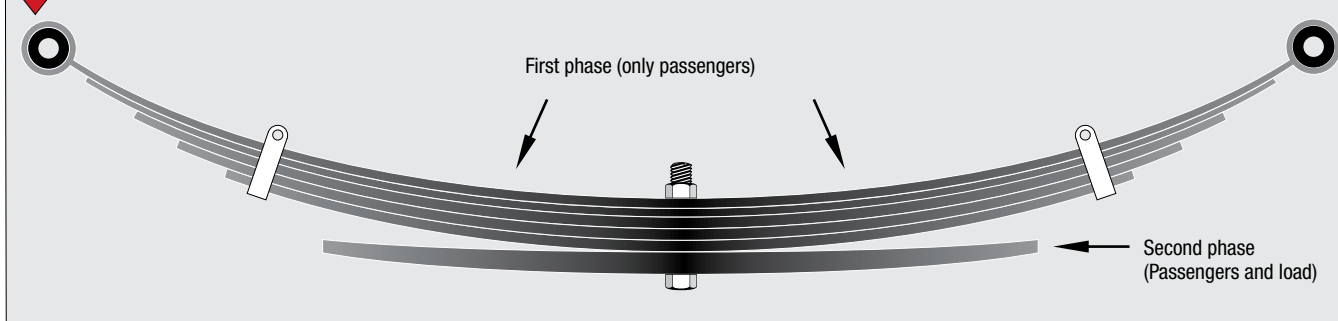
Since the first vehicles hit the road, drivers realised they needed something to make the bumps and knocks of an uneven surface more bearable for the vehicle (and your backside). The first form of suspension was more or less what we know today as leaf springs, and was used from as far back as horse carts. It did take a while before shocks were added, but in this article we will only focus on springs.

Why springs?

The main aim of springs today is to maintain a vehicle's ride height, since the damping of the up and down travel of the wheels and axles are now controlled by shock absorbers. By changing a vehicle's springs to suitable springs for the work a vehicle is required to do, we can ensure the proper ride height for such a vehicle is maintained.

Apart from leaf springs there are three other types of springs

LEAF SPRINGS



that are used in 4x4 applications: coil springs, torsion bars and air springs. Torsion bars are not commonly used anymore, and have generally been replaced by coil over shocks or struts to take up less space.

Air springs are growing in application, but are mainly used in luxury vehicles where they are combined with computer technology to do a variety of advanced things. For an off-road application, air suspension can be raised to increase the ride height in seconds, but the disadvantage is decreased wheel articulation, and thus less traction over uneven terrain.

For this reason we concentrate on the two most common forms of springs in off-road vehicles: leaf and coil springs.

Leaf springs

Leaf springs are made of a flat piece of tempered steel with a slight curve, like a bow, and are fitted on top of each other in layers to form a leaf pack. They are used on solid axles and because the leaf spring's ends are attached to the chassis, they are also used to keep the axle in its place.

The length and thickness of the individual leaves in the pack differ from each other and this gives the leaf pack the ability to progressively increase the hardness of the suspension as it gets more compressed as the weight increases or a wheel moves up.

Advantages: Leaf springs are built to last and carry heavy loads. This is why most bak-

kies use them on the rear axle.

Disadvantages: It's old technology, and though leaf springs have been improved immensely, they don't give the most comfortable ride. Vehicles with leaf springs at the back – and front in particular – can still jump around like an ox cart.

How it works: A leaf spring pack usually has a first and second phase. The first phase is made up of the top leaves in the pack that are slightly thinner than the leaves at the bottom, which rest shorter, thicker and flatter.

The function of the first phase is to handle the empty weight of the vehicle and help absorb most of the smaller bumps in the road. The second phase is there to accommodate the weight of extra cargo that is loaded onto a vehicle, and works in conjunction with the first phase to maintain the required ride height.

There is sometimes also a slight gap between the curved first phase leaves and those of the second phase. As soon as weight is loaded, the first phase is compressed flat onto the second phase and then the whole pack works as a unit.

Keep in mind: It is always a huge temptation to fit leaf springs with the highest possible load carrying capacity, because once a year you overload your bakkie for that one long holiday. But such springs are very uncomfortable if the vehicle is not heavily laden.

The springs in the first phase of a heavy-duty leaf spring are slightly harder than normal

springs. Instead of the first phase compressing completely onto the second phase, there remains a slight gap between the two if the vehicle is operated with normal loads. This means that your spring doesn't bend sufficiently to absorb bumps and results in a very harsh ride, even if the damping of the shock absorbers isn't that stiff. Then owners complain about the ride!

Coil springs

Coil springs are round steel bars that are bent into a spiral. The resilience in these coils absorbs the up-and-down movement of the wheel when it moves over unevenness.

Advantages: Coil springs give a more comfortable ride. They allow for better wheel articulation, which makes them more suited to off-road driving. They are also lighter and more compact than leaf springs.

Disadvantages: In general, the load carrying ability of coil springs is less than that of leaf springs. They limit the amount of weight that you can load onto your vehicle.

How it works: You basically get two types of coil springs – normal coils and progressive coils. The latter is made in two different ways. In the first, there is a difference in the gap between the coils moving from small to large, and the second way makes use of a steel bar that goes from thick to thin, as does the coil. This enables it to be soft initially, but get progressively harder as it is compressed, hence the con-

COIL SPRINGS



Progressive coil spring.

cept of "progressive springs". Coil springs also give a better balance between ride comfort and load carrying ability.

Keep in mind: As with leaf springs, coil springs are also made with a certain load carrying ability in mind. Make sure you get the coil springs that fit with the weight of your vehicle; otherwise they could be too hard or soft for your needs.



KEEP YOUR COOL

The decision to buy a portable fridge/freezer is a daunting one. Aside from the cost (camping fridges aren't cheap), you're likely to face other tough choices too; such as brand, model, and capacity. **SO WHERE DO YOU START?** Preferably, at the beginning, by looking at what qualities make a good fridge great. In no particular order, here's what you need know about 12V refrigeration.

VISIT WWW.NATIONALLUNA.COM FOR MORE INFO.

INSULATION

While many assume that compressor performance is the key to low power-consumption, a more accurate argument could be made in favour of insulation – the very heart of fridge/freezer efficiency. The job of the compressor is comparatively easy: pull the temperature down; but the fridge's ability to maintain that temperature without having to continuously cycle the compressor on and off, is the tall task of the unit's insulation.

COMPRESSOR

As mentioned, it's the compressor's job to pull the fridge's temperature down; and while most fridges are able to achieve this to a certain degree, it's important to note that many fridge stats are quoted at an ambient temperature of 25°C. Unfortunately the African bush is seldom so mild... particularly if the aircon's off and the

fridge is enclosed in a sealed 4x4.

Another important fact to consider is the compressor's ability to pull the temperature down as fast as possible. This may draw more amps initially, but over time, it's just as efficient, and certainly far more convenient than waiting for your drinks to cool.

CONDUCTIVITY

Conduction, possibly the most overlooked quality of 12V refrigeration, is the effectiveness by which a fridge extracts heat. Sadly, because there's no way of determining how much conductive material (generally copper pipe) is used in the manufacturing of a fridge, it's often the easiest way for fridge manufacturers to cut costs – either by substituting the copper (which is a superior conductor) for aluminium or steel pipe, or by simply using less piping during the manufacturing process.

ELECTRONICS

Electronics not only play a vital role in accurately controlling the fridge/freezer's temperature but also contribute towards effective power management and reliability. In some cases, they add a few handy features, too, such as voltage monitoring and intelligent battery-protection – the ability to automatically shut the fridge down to protect your vehicle's battery so that your 4x4 can still start.

RELIABILITY AND SERVICE

This is arguably the most important feature of any portable fridge/freezer, particularly when the hopes of your overland holiday rest its ability to cool your food. Visually, it's almost impossible to gauge the reliability of a fridge, but a lot can be discovered by asking about backup service, availability of spares, and how long the manufacturers have been in business.



AS COOL AS IT GETS

National Luna recently launched their brand new model, the 60litre Twin. It's currently the world's most powerful 12V fridge/freezer combination, and boasts a number of high-end features, such as:

- Industry-leading Danfoss design compressor with 3 year manufacturer's warranty
- Dual controls for individual temperature adjustment per compartment
- Battery protection with automatic cut-off and alarm
- Up to 60mm of insulation
- Capable of -18°C at a 43°C ambient temperature (highest international fridge specification)
- Exclusive use of generous copper-pipe conductors
- Robust carry handles which double as tie-down points
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Practice makes perfect

At **Protea 4x4 Adventures** in the Rhino & Lion Nature Reserve, you can do 4x4 trails, see game and do a bit of training. All in one!

WORDS AND PHOTOS GEOFF LEVEY



Go to www.tracks4africa.co.za/wegrydriveout.asp for more info.

TRACKS4AFRICA

At the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve near Krugersdorp, you can get the best of three worlds. You can drive on the reserve's main routes to view game, you can take some of the many turn-offs and drive 4x4 trails deeper into the reserve, and you can practice your skills on an obstacle course.

The Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve is situated in the world-famous heritage site, the Cradle of Humankind. It is privately owned and covers an area of 1200 hectare.

The main roads in the park are graded so that normal sedans can drive around without getting damaged. But every so often there are tracks that branch off from these roads so that one can drive in other parts of the reserve. These roads are only suitable for high clearance vehicles.

You might be able to get away with

driving them in a 4x2, but it's better to drive them in a 4x4. Make sure you switch to 4x4 mode to ensure minimal damage to the track and environment.

There's no shortage of wildlife to see while driving around. The reserve has more than 600 head of game, consisting of more than 30 species. It is also home to four of the Big Five, the missing member being the elephant.

The various predators live in their own camps and within most of these camps there are off-road trails. Many of these definitely require 4x4 and other aids like a rear diff lock, so check at the main entrance which roads to avoid if you're in a 4x2.

While driving these trails, you can see all sorts of game from all over the world. Apart from the big predators and a list of local species such as giraffe, cheetah, leopard and crocodile, the reserve also has bison, pygmy hippo,



TIME TO PLAY (top). At Protea 4x4 you can spend some time testing your and your vehicle's skills.

STOP AND STARE (above). There is a large variety of game to see while driving through the reserve's trails.

white, Siberian and Bengal tigers, clouded leopard and even jaguars.

There is interesting plains game, like the Arabian oryx. Also keep your eyes peeled for the scimitar-horned oryx, with its horns bent in a backward bow, the four-horned sheep (yes, it has two pairs of horns!) and the expensive, and rather rare, sable antelope.

Along the way, you'll see some beautiful Highveld bush and enjoy a tranquil, serene setting.

Training wheels for your vehicle

Jannie Rykaart has been operating a training facility, Protea 4x4, inside the Rhino & Lion Nature Reserve for the last two and a half years. It's not a "hard-core" 4x4 trail, but serves nicely as a training venue for beginners.

Jannie has created a training track consisting of man-made and natural obstacles. Protea 4x4 Adventures is the official Mitsubishi training centre in Gauteng, and other manufactures also



ROOM WITH A VIEW (above). There are comfortable chalets for hire on the reserve if you're planning on making a weekend of it.

make use of these facilities.

The trail starts with a cross axle section where you can get to know your vehicle's wheel articulation limits. From here, you head on to a wooden bridge,

made up of a number of poles. Again, it's not a dangerous or highly technical affair, but the poles may get your teeth rattling. After these, you're confronted with some more cross axles, followed by side slopes and rocky sections.

Next, you get to some up-and-downhill sections. These are very good places to practice your slow hill ascents and descents and get to grips with your vehicle's braking and engine power or hill ascent and descent controls. From there, you follow through to a side slope section and then a very steep uphill climb. The climb is a challenge, but there are markers on both sides going up, so that you can see where the edge is. It's a good thing too, because if they weren't there the chances of going over the edge would be high. It's so steep that from behind the wheel, all the driver can see is the sky above.

Of course, what goes up must come down, and the descent on the other side of the hill is very steep. Before you can properly gather your wits, the next obstacle appears – a swing bridge.

If you haven't seen one of these before, it looks like a large see-saw for cars, usually built with long logs. The purpose of the swing bridge is to try and get one's vehicle in such a position that it balances on the log bridge. It helps you practice your precision driving and vehicle control.

Everybody to the left

Once you're back on terra firma after the swing bridge, the next obstacle is a pretty steep side slope, at an angle of about 35 degrees. Personally, I don't

NEED TO KNOW

ON THE TRAIL

How long are the routes? The training track is only 3.5km but you can drive all day on the routes through the reserve.

Maximum number of vehicles: 20

Do I get a map? Yes.

Will my car get scratched? No.

Should I take the running boards off? No.

Should I take a compressor? Yes (because you should always have one with you!)

Can we have a braai en route? Yes.

Will I see game? Most definitely. There are loads of plains game, predators and four of the Big Five.

AROUND THE TRAIL

Best time to go? All year round.

Can I take my family along? Definitely.

Just for the day or the weekend? Both.

What else can we do there? You can enjoy plenty of animal interactions, for example at the lion and predator camps, vulture hide and reptile park, and go on game drives.

Are there ablution facilities for day visitors? Yes.

The nearest town: Krugersdorp (22 km).

How do I get there?

Take the R28/N14 (Pretoria/Krugersdorp) highway towards Krugersdorp. Turn right at the first intersection with traffic lights. Drive for approximately 8 km on the N14 until you find a sign marked Kromdraai on the right-hand side.

Turn right at the sign and follow the road for approximately 7 km until you find a traffic circle at a low water bridge. Drive straight on for another 800 m and find the Rhino & Lion Nature Reserve's main entrance on the left-hand side.

ACCOMMODATION

5 Log cabins (self-catering) with kitchen, lounge/dining room, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, electricity, Jacuzzi, braai and DSTV. They sleep 16-24 people in total.

3 Chalets (self-catering) with kitchen, lounge/dining room, 2 bedrooms each (with en-suite bathrooms), braai, swimming pool, gas only (no electricity or plugs). They sleep 12-16 people in total.

CONTACT:

Jannie Rykaart ☎ 083 268 0566 ✉ info@protea4x4.co.za 🌐 www.protea4x4.co.za

GPS POINTS:

Turnoff from N14: S26.03470 E27.75984
Entrance gate: S25.97365 E27.79301

COSTS

Entrance fee: Adults R140.00 p.p.; children R100.00 p.p.

4x4 training: Driver R1 850, passenger R300 p.p. (includes entrance fee and food/refreshments for the day).

TRAILS | PROTEA 4X4

like slopes like this, but it's necessary to drive them, as they get you used to the feeling of almost falling over and to your vehicle's tip-over angle.

After another hill climb and descent, it's time for a water crossing. Even though this obstacle is used as a training obstacle, you still need to walk it before you take your vehicle in. It's simply safe practice to walk an obstacle first to see if there are any surprises waiting for you. As with all water crossings, don't forget to roll the window down for safety. (And to get into the habit for the day you have to cross a flowing river!)

From here, you drive up and down some more ascents and descents, cross big dongas and more slopes and rocky sections before reaching the end of the training track.

More fun!

The Lion & Rhino Nature Reserve isn't just about driving obstacles and trails. There is also a 4x4 braai area in the reserve, nicely tucked away under the shade of a cluster of trees.


You can also go to a day visitor's centre consisting of a number of braai areas



GRAB A BITE (above). Both the inside and the outside of the Boma restaurant are kitted out with African decor.

and a pub. Here, you'll find an animal crèche with numerous animals, including many cat species. You are allowed to interact with the cubs when visiting. There's a "Vulture Restaurant" on the property with a lookout point where one can see the Cape Vulture.

Definitely make time to visit The Wonder Cave, one of the Cradle of Humankind's 12 World Heritage Sites.

This natural wonder is believed to be between 5 and 10 million years old, with formations of up to 15 m high inside. You can visit the snake/reptile park, hippo pools and breeding centre and do horse trails. So pack your binoculars, reference books and refreshments (and your recovery gear) and swing by for a visit. It is a great getaway for a day or weekend to have some fun and relax. 



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FIRE IN THE SKY. The Brandberg burns as the team camps in the Ugab River.

In the heart of Damaraland

With five days in Damaraland, four nights in four river beds and three different vehicles, **Wouter Labuschagne** and his friends had one goal in mind— to feel the heartbeat of Damaraland.

It all began with a discussion about vehicles – which one climbs rocks the best, which is the best in sand and which uses the least fuel, the usual things that 4x4 enthusiasts talk about when work starts to take its toll.

I had recently returned from Kaokoland, and was busy evaluating my Toyota with Annas Botha, the owner of TJM in Middelburg, who

previously kitted out my 2009 Fortuner from front to back. He stood and looked at me and said “So, when are we going again?”

Naturally I was very enthusiastic about the idea. When my brother, Deon Labuschagne, who had recently bought himself a Ford Ranger, also wanted to join us, the only logical conclusion was to go test out our vehicles in Namibia.

The day for the perfect getaway to the heart of Damaraland with a Toyota, a Volkswagen and a Ford had finally arrived.

The winning team

In our group we had: Annas, Rinalda and their children, Ri-Ann and Annas junior (The Fantastic Four). They were Volkswagen’s representatives with their 2011 Amarok. Deon and his

wife, Sandra (The A-Team), represented Ford in a 2015 Ranger XLT 3.2. I and my wife, Glynnis, and our three sons Andrew, Shaun and Eckard (The Big Five), were Toyota’s ambassadors in our 2009 Fortuner, 3.0 D-4D.

We left Middelburg on a cold winter’s morning at 4 am and met Deon and company in Pretoria to tackle the road to a (hopefully) warmer desert in Namibia. Luckily,



ON YOUR MARKS... The friends pose for a photo at Twyfelfontein.

we only had a small hiccup on the 1200 km to Grūnau and the next day's 1000 km up to Swakopmund was, as it always is, a chance to enjoy the open spaces that Namibia is famous for. The outstanding condition that the roads (tar, gravel and salt) are kept in was especially noteworthy.

When we arrived in Swakopmund, we stayed for three days, enjoying the hospitality and charm of this coastal town. Three days were definitely too few and we decided we would have to come back again to properly enjoy the town and its surroundings.

Among other things, we spent half a day in the dunes experiencing the fascinating survival of desert creatures and plant life, and thanks to Tommy Collard, Swakopmund legend and expert tour guide, we were enlightened on the interdependency and complexity of desert life.

Rhinos in the desert

We left Swakopmund on Monday morning, taking the salt road to the north, and soon we had forgotten about load-shedding and the economy. Wlotzskabaken's

desalination plant, Bennie se Rooi Lorrie and Tolla and Sarah se Gat, brought us to Mile 100, where we turned towards the interior.

We came across the Messum River, about 10 km into the interior, and chose a course in the direction of the Brandberg. Perhaps it's hard to believe, but this trail is a game drive with a difference. The rock formations which have been created through centuries of wind and water erosion are an amusement park for the imagination. On the rock walls we imagined the shapes of rhinos, warthogs, lions, ostriches and anything that our minds could picture on the walls.

It was as if the animals watched the vehicles' progress through their river bed. The rock formations are enough to cause any teenager to look up in wonder from their tablet or cellphone and help look for "animals" in the surroundings.

Our plan was to spend the first night in the Brandberg, but this "game drive" was so *lekker* that we decided to set up camp in the Messum river bed at the foot of the Brandberg instead.

Such an expedition is always about more than just travelling from point A to point B, and this is self-sufficient camping. By self-sufficient, I mean you're responsible for everything, your own water, bathroom, kitchen and all the stuff that goes along with that.

It requires good organising skills, and thus over the years it's become a challenge for me and my family to perfect the distribution of tasks. In our team there is a tent master (Andrew), a crate master (Shaun) and a roof master (Eckard), besides all sorts of other responsibilities that are divided among our whole crew.

Practical things like helping to cook, setting up sleeping

spots and showering under a tree, give children a sense of team-building that nothing can beat.

The Ugab

On the second day, feeling very small and insignificant in this massive cosmos, we chose a northward course against the Brandberg, in the direction of the Numas River, and drove along the Numas Schlucht until we reached the Ugab River.

This river bed is any nature-lovers dream. You have to keep an eye out for desert elephants and the bed is an interesting 4x4 challenge. As we drove in an easterly direction up the Ugab, we saw the devastation to the environment that can be wreaked by a veld fire. The impact on the wildlife is huge, and one wonders how such a fire was started. I hope that it wasn't caused by an irresponsible camper's runaway fire.

The rock formations are enough to cause any teenager to look up in wonder from their tablet or cellphone and help look for "animals" in the surroundings.



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We got stuck in the marshy sections of the river bed – where the reeds begin growing again – we couldn't get through the bog! We decided to drive back westwards to avoid the obstacles of marsh, rock and water until we reached Divorce Pass, and thus managed to get out of the river bed that way.

What an enriching adventure it was! Here, between marshes and rocks, our vehicles and drivers were really put to the test for the first time. We constantly had to look for new paths and show each other what line to drive in order to get through. But the combination of excitement and uncertainty can be addictive, and that's what will bring a person back here year after year to this beautiful part of creation – the real Africa.

By the way, Divorce Pass is so named due to the effect that the drive can have on the relationship between the driver and co-driver.

No doubt about Twyfelfontein

Out of the Ugab, we headed north to our next river bed – the Goantagab – where we had to deflate our tyres for the loose, deep sand. The third night of camping was particularly memorable because of the amazing night sky. Here we took a breather, and the following morning we created a makeshift "bathroom". We rigged the shower under a tree so that the sun baked on your body warmly while you washed. Better than the Hilton hotel, according to Deon. Leaving the Goantagab, we headed north-west in the

ON TOP OF THE WORLD. Eckard is known as the family's roof master.



direction of Twyfelfontein, where we stopped for a quick break and where we could fill up again with diesel (it was even 50 ppm!). Each day you would think that it couldn't get better than this, only to have a more memorable experience the next day. That is how we felt when we spent our fourth night sleeping in the Aba-Huab. This river bed is a paradise of game, with elephants, lions, leopards and all kinds of other wildlife in abundance.

Sadly, this was the last time we set up camp in the desert. Though we weren't too heart sore about this, because it was an adventure that had enriched our bodies and souls and one that we wanted to do again and again.

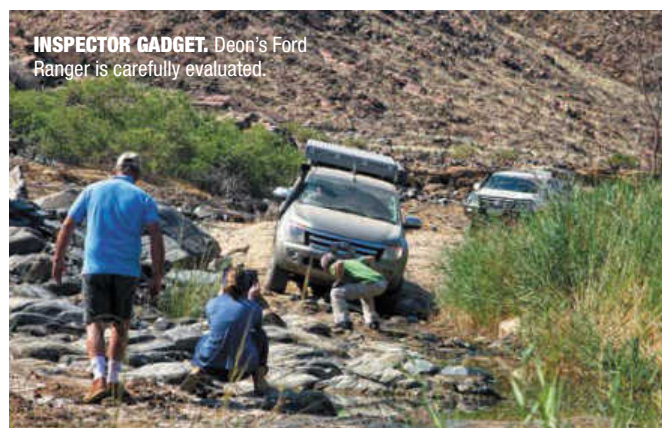
Every member of our team had their own highlight of the trip – setting up camp, a night around the fire with pot bread and lamb chops, the shower under the tree, the starry night

sky or the challenges of a 4x4 experience that put our vehicles to the test. Everyone will remember this trip in Damaraland for their own reasons, but the memories will last a lifetime.

And for those who hoped that one of the vehicles would come out tops in the competition between them, I have some news for you: there was no clear winner or loser. So, buy the vehicle that you like and kit it out

so that you can tackle an adventure like this. Whether it's the Ford Ranger's torque and comfort, or the Amarok's economic fuel consumption and space or the Fortuner's reliability, all three of these vehicles have excellent 4x4 capabilities.

At no point did any of them prove less capable than another, and at the end of our expedition, we all decided that our own vehicle is the best. 🚗



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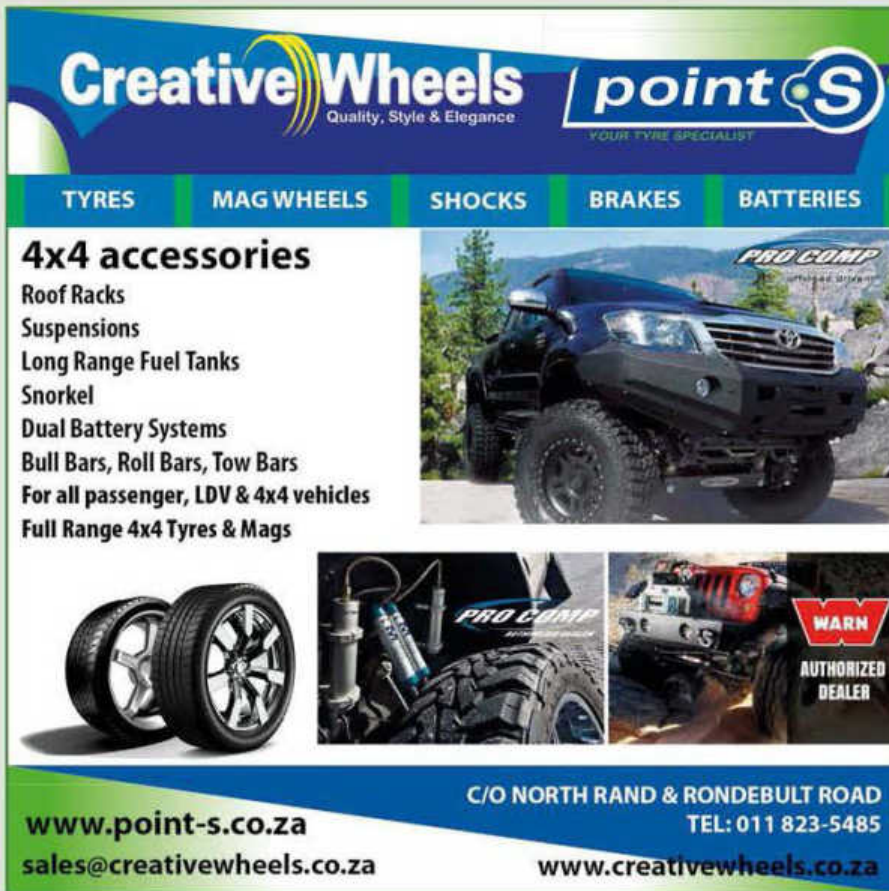
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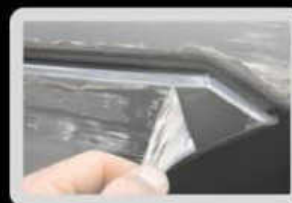
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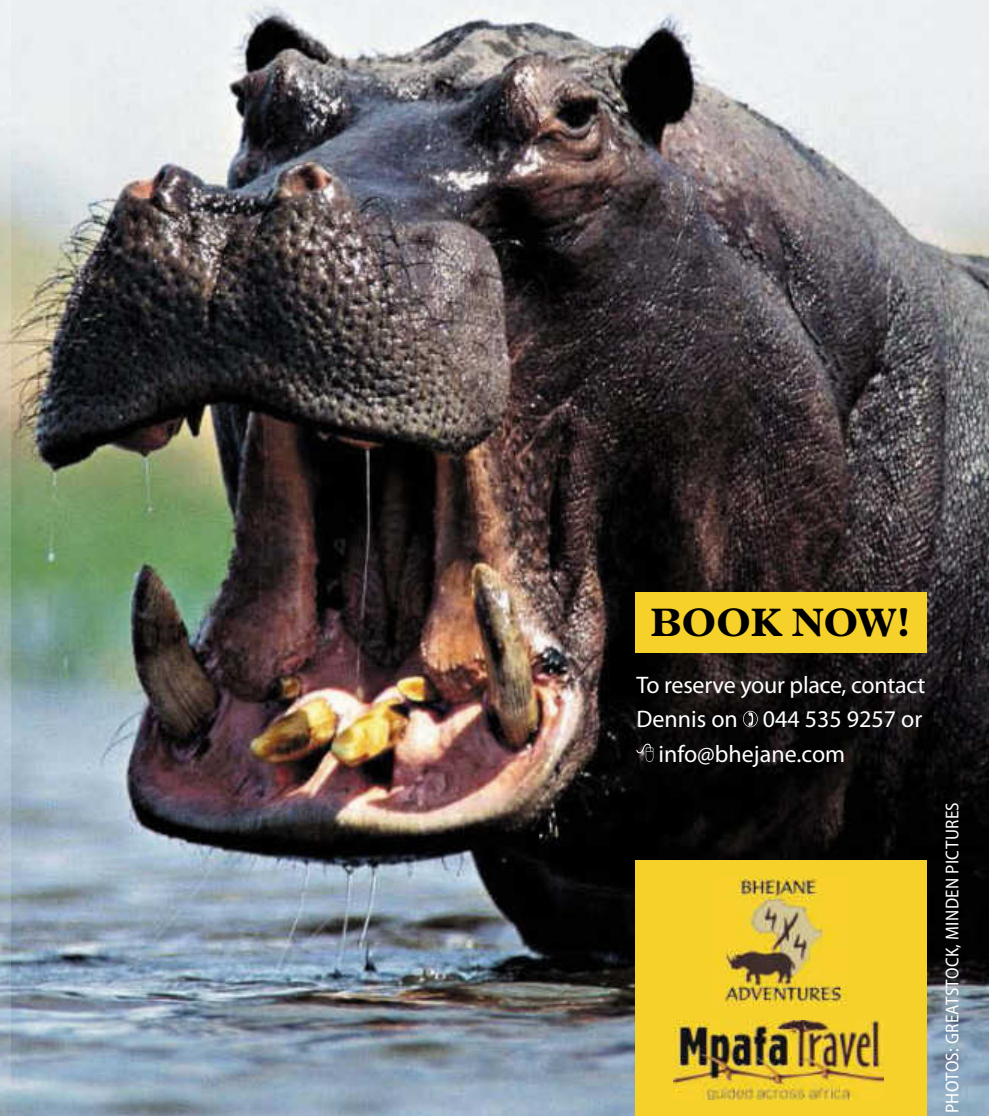
Grab your camera equipment, your camp chairs and your sense of adventure and join *Drive Out* and *Mpafa Travel* on a photo tour through Botswana! We are teaming up with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures/Mpafa Travel for an epic trip from 8 to 18 April 2016. In addition to experiencing highlights such as the Okavango Delta, the Makgadikgadi Pans, the Caprivi and Victoria Falls, *go!* photo editor Shelley Christians will be on hand to help you take your photographic skills to the next level. Under Shelley's expert tuition and Bhejane/Mpafa's experienced guidance, you'll experience the country in an unforgettable way.

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Focus, man!

Do you sometimes struggle to take clear, sharp photos? Here are five ways to make sure that you get your camera to focus properly.

There are few things that will frustrate a wildlife photographer as much as blurred or out-of-focus pictures. Keep these five things in mind, and your photos should be as sharp as the view through a pair of Swarovski binoculars.

1 CHECK THE LENS

Camera lenses have a button that allows you to choose between “auto focus” (A/AF) and “manual focus” (M/MF). In MF you have to adjust the focusing ring yourself, in AF the camera does it for you. First make sure that this button hasn’t accidentally toggled to M/MF.

2 CHECK THE MODE

When your lens is set to AF, you also have to choose an “auto

focus” mode on the camera. For **still-standing subjects**, make sure that the camera focuses exclusively on the subject and “locks” the focus on that point. On Canon DSLR cameras, this is called One Shot, and on Nikons it’s called AF-S.

For **moving subjects** the camera has to constantly focus on the subject. This setting is called Continuous Auto Focus Mode or AI Servo for Canon users, and AF-C for Nikon. If you

use the wrong focus mode in the wrong circumstances, the photo can come out a bit blurred. For example, take a look at Photo A below of an active leopard cub. The photo is out of focus, because I shot a moving subject in One Shot/AF-S. Now look at Photo B. This photo is in focus, because I toggled over to AI Servo/AF-C.

3 LIGHTEN UP

To focus on a darkened subject is almost impossible. So brighten your subject at night with a spot light or external flash.

4 TAKE THE FILTER OFF

While UV filters protect your lens’ glass, some can cause your photos to look softer and blurred.

Test your gear with and without the UV filter, and see if it makes a difference to the photo’s clarity.

5 CHOOSE THE RIGHT SHUTTER SPEED

Even if your camera is focused on the subject, the end result can still look blurred if your shutter speed is too low.

Ensure that your shutter speed is 1 value over the focus length that you are using. So, if you’re using a 100-400 mm lens and zoom in to 400 mm, your shutter speed should be at least 1/400 seconds. You can increase your shutter speed by changing from Automatic Mode to Program Mode (P) and increasing the ISO value, for example from 100 to 400 or 800.



EXTRA TIP:

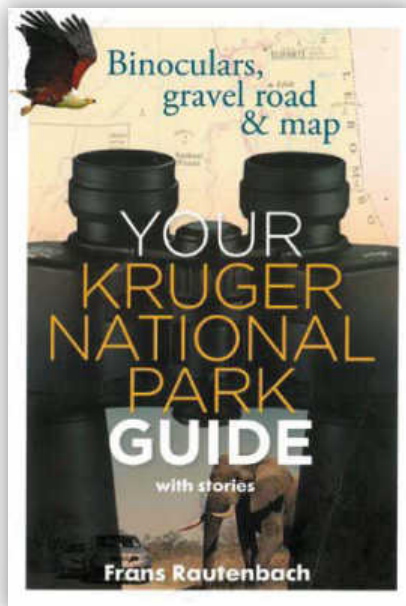
Some lenses deliver weak, blurred results when they are zoomed in to their maximum, like the first edition of Canon’s 100-400 mm lens and Tamron’s relatively new 150-600 mm.

You can increase the clarity of the photos by:

- (a) Zooming out a little
- (b) Using a higher f-stop in Aperture Priority (A/Av) for example: f/8 instead of f/5.6.

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By Frans Rautenbach

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Price: R250

When my Scottish family came out from the UK to holiday with us in the Kruger Park, it was hard to explain to them what to expect from an authentic Kruger experience. On the first day, we saw the Big Five, and on the days following, we mostly just saw lots of impala. That's when Frans Rautenbach's *Your Kruger National Park Guide* would have come in handy for them.

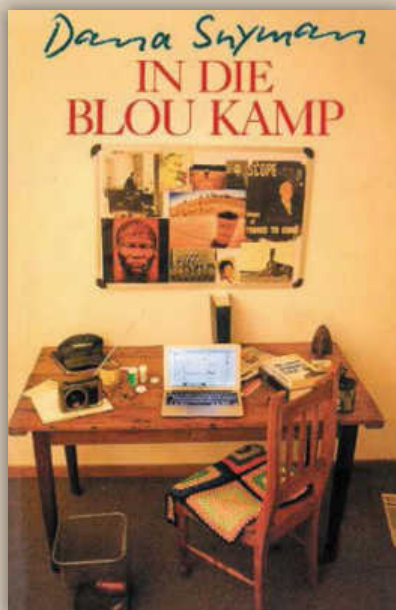
This book is the ideal beginners guide to Kruger. Frans has been going to the park for over 50 years, which resulted in this book, and it comes with both practical advice and stories from his experiences in Kruger. He accurately captures the atmosphere of the Kruger Park, an atmosphere which is seldom found in other bushveld settings. His descriptions of the various camps and rest stops within the park are quite precise, and he provides a rating for

each in terms of atmosphere, game viewing and location (bear in mind that this is based on his experience and opinion).

Some of my travelling companions, who have also been going to Kruger for nigh on 30 years, disagreed with some of his statements, like having to drive for miles to see game. But on the whole, his advice is sound. The little book is practical, giving gate times, packing lists, classic recipes for cooking in the park, and the top five routes on which you are likely to see the Big Five. Most Kruger-lovers will already be familiar with how to make the most of their time in the park, which Frans covers in the book.

But if you have a friend who's never been to Kruger, this book is both a great present and the ideal introduction to what is bound to be a fantastic bush holiday.

– Aimee Bishop



SOUTH AFRICA, VIA FACEBOOK

IN DIE BLOU KAMP

By Dana Snyman

DISTRIBUTED BY: Tafelberg Publishers

PRICE: R225

Afrikaans author and travel journalist Dana Snyman needs no introduction, especially if you're a reader of *Drive Out* and its sister magazines *Weg!* and *go!* where his words have been printed over the years.

Dana is known for his insights into the people of South Africa. On his travels, he spends time with those from all walks of life, giving him a deep understanding of what is the true soul of the country.

In his latest book, *In die blou kamp*, the writer has put together a series of short musings based on people he met or experiences he had on his travels and

at home on the West Coast. The name, which means "in the blue camp," is a reference to Facebook – all 100 musings were born on Facebook, where he first wrote them on his page.

Dana has a gift for words, and conjures all kinds of emotions in the reader. Some of the "stories" will have you chuckling over your morning coffee. Others give you that melancholy feeling of a lonely Sunday afternoon with the dry wind howling around the corners of an empty house.

But it's the perfect travel companion, with bite-sized snippets, perfect for those moments on a trip where you have a few minutes to read.

– Charles Thompson



'Tis the season to be **braaiing**

Are you going to be on the road this December holiday and plan to prepare your Christmas feast in the bush? *Lekker!* We show you how to make all the classic favourites far away from your kitchen.

Photos: Piet van Wyk





STUFFED FLATTIE

Across the world, turkey is synonymous with Christmas, but if you take this massive bird along with you in your camp fridge, it's likely that you won't have any space left for your beer. This flattened chicken is more practical and more delicious.

INGREDIENTS:

- The biggest farm chicken you can find
- Olive oil
- 1 medium-sized onion, finely sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 4 pork sausages (removed from the casing)
- ½ cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1 egg, whisked
- ½ cup feta, finely crumbled
- 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

HERE'S HOW:

Fry the onion in a bit of olive oil until soft and see-through and add the garlic. Fry this for another minute. Add the sausage meat and break it up finely while it fries. Add half a cup of dry white wine, ground black pepper and sage and simmer for another 5 minutes. Remove the mixture from the heat and let it cool down. Now add the bread crumbs, whisked egg and feta, as well as some salt and pepper, to the mixture.

Cut the chicken open. Many people cut the chicken between the two breasts and open it that way, but I cut it open along the backbone (from the parson's nose to the neck) so that the breasts stay next to each other. Turn it over and push it down flat until you hear the breast bone crack. Now you have a proper flattie.

Slip your fingers between the skin and the meat and loosen as much of the skin as possible. Stuff handfuls of filling under the skin equally, be sure to cover the breasts, legs and various pieces. If there is any stuffing left over, roll into balls and fry. Pour about a quarter cup of olive oil over the chicken, along with a teaspoon of salt, rubbing this into the chicken well. Now it's ready for the coals.

Braai the chicken over medium coals, turning regularly. Squeeze lemon juice onto it every now and then. The meat should be nicely browned and cooked through to the bone after about an hour. Take it off the fire, cover with foil and let the meat rest for 15 minutes in a *skottle* before serving.



BRANDY AND COKE SHORT RIBS

A good excuse to pack in extra brandy!

INGREDIENTS:

Beef short ribs of about 2 kg

For the marinade:

- 1 cup of Coke
- ½ cup brandy
- 1 tablespoon soya sauce
- 1 tablespoon Worcester sauce
- 2 tablespoons tomato sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano

HERE'S HOW:

Mix the ingredients for the marinade together nicely. Put the ribs in a strong plastic bag that is big enough to fit all of them in, and pour the marinade over the ribs. Rub the meat well through the bag to cover them with the marinade. Now marinate them for a few hours, preferably overnight.

Braai the ribs slowly. A whole chunk of short ribs is a thick piece of meat and you need to have patience. Keep the coals moderate and braai them for about two hours while occasionally covering the meat with the remaining marinade. If possible, put the grid next to the fire while you are making the coals. In this way, the braaiing can begin before the coals are entirely ready.



CHRISTMAS KASSLER CHOPS

It's not Christmas dinner without pork!

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 smoked pork or kasserl chops
- Mustard to taste
- Olive oil
- 1 large onion, sliced into thin rings
- 1 red pepper cored and sliced into rings
- 1 green pepper, cored and sliced into rings
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 tin pineapple rings
- Salt and pepper to taste

HERE'S HOW:

Soak the chops for 30 minutes in cold water. Dry them off, mix two tablespoons of mustard with a tablespoon of olive oil and cover the chops well with this mixture.

Fry the onion and peppers in a pan on a moderate heat. After a few minutes, add the garlic and ginger and fry for two minutes. Add the sugar and pineapple rings and half of the pineapple sauce. Fry until the pineapple turns brown and the sauce is sticky. Keep adding a bit of the pineapple sauce until the tin is empty. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Braai the chops on moderate coals for about 4 minutes a side. Place the chops in a serving dish and pour the pineapple sauce over them.

QUICK TRIFLE

We all have that one family member that wants to eat the whole pudding by themselves on Christmas. With this you can do one of two things: make mini trifles for each person or one large dish.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 packet finger biscuits (like Boudoir biscuits)
- Brandy, whisky or rum
- Strawberry jam
- 4 bananas
- 1 tin mixed fruit
- 1 can whipped cream
- 2 Flake chocolates
- 1 litre long-life custard

HERE'S HOW:

Break the biscuits in half and put two layers of them at the bottom of the dish. Sprinkle a

bit of alcohol over them and smear them with jam. Cut the bananas up and put slices on top of the biscuits. Cover everything with custard. Repeat this pattern, but instead of the bananas use the can of mixed fruit. Finish with a nice thick layer of cream and sprinkle the chocolate over it so that you almost feel like Jamie Oliver. The method is the same whether you choose to do individual puddings or one large container.



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BY MARINDA LOUW COETZEE

ROCKY and the birthday cake

Dirt roads that shake the fillings out your mouth and fancy little sweet treats are not good friends, as **Marinda Louw Coetzee** discovered the hard way.

“**T**am! Tam-tam-tam! Tam-tam-taaaaam! The eye of the tiger...”

The jukebox in Wellington’s Station Hotel vibrates with the sounds of the Rocky theme song. I’ve just thrown in a coin and I’m pumping my fist in the air to the opening chords. The other guests in the pub raise their beers in salute and one begins to shadow box. There is actually no one else here to fight with, because it was only our group standing at the hotel’s front doors when they opened that Sunday.

It’s three in the afternoon, but the smell of Jeyes fluid on the parquet floors still hangs in the air. We’re sharing a last drink before we all head home after our weekend of gravel travel.

Our adventure begins two days before in Melkbosstrand, and our group for the weekend consists of four engineers and a conservationist, all mounted on big adventure motorbikes. My husband Richard and I are the only ones with a four-wheel vehicle – our tiny Lada Niva. Our plan is to drive from Melkbos to Driehoek, a farm situated deep in the Cederberg where you can relax next to a bubbling brook.

It’s cold next to the seaside while we wait for our American friend Doug. Doug is a Harley-rider, but for the weekend’s trip he’s hired a BMW.

“Oh ja,” asks a friend, “would you please pack my cake in for me?” It’s her birthday weekend, and as dessert for tonight, Elna bought three containers of treats from a little baking shop.

They’re like tiny little bonsai cakes, neatly packed under plastic lids,

obediently arranged on foamalite – red velvet cupcakes with meringue towers for icing, tangy lemon tarts and dainty milk tarts with cinnamon patterns.

Our boot is tiny, and so we put the back seats down to pack in the duvets, warm clothes, firewood and drinks. The treats are sitting snugly between the wood and the linen, ready for our trip.

It is late morning, the air is fresh and clean and the dirt roads are wet and full of puddles after the night’s rain. On a rough, corrugated road near Darling one of the treat’s lids comes loose, and three red velvet cupcakes roll straight into my outstretched hand! I give one to Richard and close them up again.

We stop for coffee and breakfast. Someone buys 2 litres of milk, 18 beers and another bag of wood. All this gets loaded into the back of the Lada. I rearrange the cakes – everything is sitting tightly – and we hit the road again for the next stretch to Citrusdal.

There we make another quick stop at the Spar. Bags with containers of potato salad, chicken pieces and curry mince vetkoek, chocolate milks and 12 bananas join the load in the back of the Lada, and we follow the gravel path all the way along the Oliphants River. The narrow little road is badly corrugated and it just happens to conveniently loosen two lemon tarts from their packaging, one for each of us.

At the cross roads where you turn right to Algeria, we call a stop. Like baboons dressed in Sunday suits, we climb the rocks above the crossroads and we all find a spot to sit with our bags and boxes of food.

Below us a car comes to a stop, the gravel crunching under its wheels. An old lady calls up: “Whose Lada is this?!”

“Mine!” yells Richard.

“How did it make it so far?” she shouts.

“I pushed it!” he answers.

“Can I take a photo?” the lady asks.

She tells us that she also has a Lada back in Pretoria but that the engine had to be replaced.

It’s time for us to tackle Nieuwoudts Pass, and the Lada shakes more than a bottom in a pair of hipster pants. At the top of the pass, we try to bring order to Elna’s cakes. One of the containers slips open and a milk tart hits me smack in the mouth. I shift the other tarts around so that no one will notice the gaping hole, but we’ve barely reached the summit of Uitkyk Pass when a lemon tart hits Richard side-on, landing right on his tongue!

From Uitkyk Pass the sun is shining its last golden rays over the Algeria Valley. It’s been a long day, and we’re hungry. Ian, the Scotsman cracks open a beer and gives a deep sigh. “Where else would you want to be?” No one answers; it’s not necessary.

Later that night, as the full moon climbs up behind the rocks and peaks through the poplar trees, our group huddles around the braai fire to try and beat the cold. Packets of meat are opened and the grid looks like a neat, red, meaty jigsaw puzzle.

Judy opens up a Woolworths salad and a tower of toasties is balancing on the wall next to the braai spot.

“Where are the cakes?!” Koos suddenly shouts.

I look for a bug in my whiskey and Richard plays nervously with the braai tongs. “Is that an owl?” I ask innocently pointing in another direction.

After all the shaking on the road, there was chaos in the Lada. The braai wood and duvet were in a fight with the lemon tarts. The red velvets tipped over and left a smear of meringue on the back window and there are just three of the milk tarts left over. It’s too much for Elna, and she turns back to the fire.

I take a carton box out of a black bag. The double-layer chocolate cake, decorated with flowers and shiny chocolate ganache, is perfect, spotless and undamaged. I put 45 candles on it and light them.

We walk back to the fire.

Tam! Tam-tam-tam! Tam-tam-taaaaam... It’s Elna’s cellphone. On the other side I can hear her sisters singing: “Happy birthday to you...”

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OOPS!



Stumped by a bump

Terrain, tyre pressure and momentum are some of the usual suspects that can get you stuck. But sometimes it can be something as simple as your vehicle's length that gets you into trouble.

In 2011, I was young and dumb, with little 4x4 driving experience. I used to own a Nissan SANI 3.0 V6 with no lockers, limited slip-diff or any of the other 4x4 technology found in most vehicles today. So sometimes, a little extra momentum was needed to accomplish some of the more difficult obstacles. After the SANI, I bought my Iron Maiden, a 4,2 litre Nissan Patrol, with a straight six, intercooled turbo engine. It's a 3ton chunk of iron with solid axles, front and rear, that

can flex more than some ladies on poles at those places where men shouldn't go.

So, along with my sweet maidens (my better half and my Patrol), I visited my friend Wimpie Olivier at a 4x4 track in Lichtenburg, around the corner from his house. I followed Wimpie around the Lichtenburg trail, and with each obstacle my confidence grew. I even climbed a massive, steep incline with ease.

Brimming with confidence, I followed Wimpie over a "speedbump". I should

SO CLOSE. The length of Cedric's Patrol turned a simple bump into an unforeseen obstacle. After a quick recovery, he saw where his vehicle scraped (below).



have looked at the "speedbump" before venturing over it, because long wheel bases and "speedbumps" tackled head-on are not a good idea!

After being recovered by Wimpie's Patrol, I saw how one shaves a few millimetres off the top of a speed bump. It was still fun to learn, albeit out of stupidity. Hopefully I've progressed a bit since then!

CEDRIC WARNER
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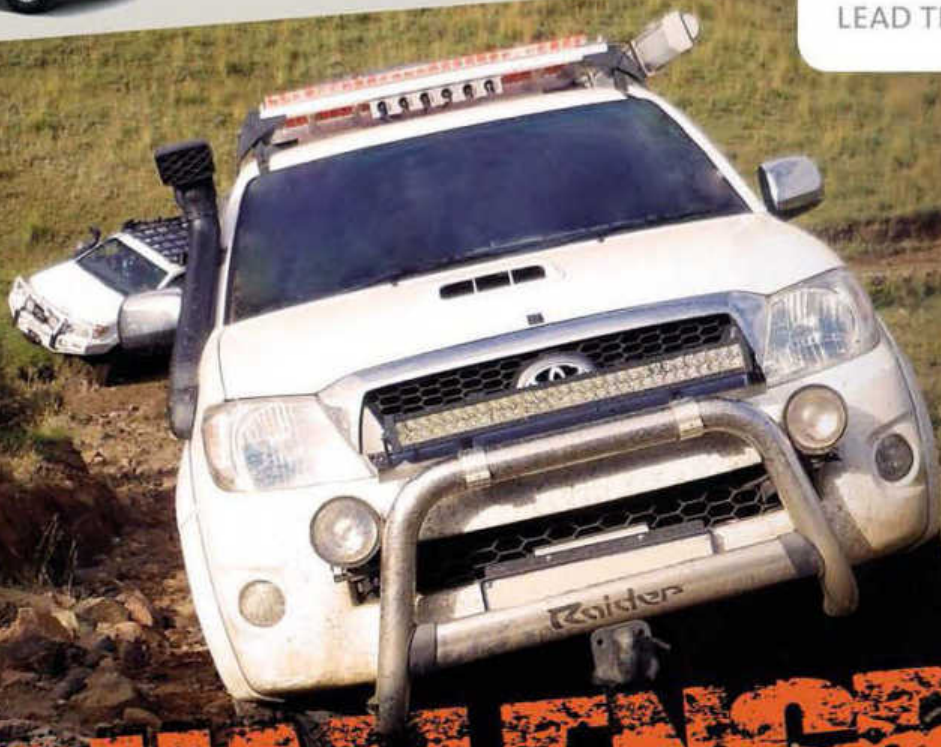


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